Open at the Margins

OPEN AT THE MARGINS

Critical Perspectives on Open Education

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Maha Bali, Catherine Cronin, Laura Czerniewicz, Robin DeRosa, and Rajiv Jhangiani

"[M]arginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation; in fact...it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality... as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose – to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center – but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds". (bell hooks 1990, p. 149-150).

The open education movement has made significant progress since it was first explicitly articulated less than two decades ago. Its provenance is often dated back to the announcement of open courseware at a US university, MIT. Since then it has made great strides, especially in the realm of open textbooks, and these especially in the global north. Among its most inspiring developments has been a broadening and refocusing of the conversation to include open pedagogy and open educational practices (OEP), including approaches that extend beyond those that directly involve OER.

Open education is at a critical juncture now. It has moved on from its northern roots and is increasingly being challenged from its own periphery. At the same time, it finds itself marginalised and under threat in an educational sector infiltrated by corporate interests.

It is our contention that rather than bunkering down, becoming blinkered or even complacent, that the voices from the periphery should be amplified. We argue, like Mbembe (2015), for a more open critical pluriversalism – a task which he points out involves the radical re-founding of our ways of thinking and one which embraces via a horizontal strategy of openness a dialogue among different epistemic traditions.

Open education agendas are not simply being "openwashed" as has been observed by many; our concern is that that they have become watered down. It is clear that questions about equity and social justice need to be reasserted at this time. It is also a moment to question power relations within broader open education networks. When MIT (and others) opened their courseware to the world, it was a one-to-many form of engagement, premised on offering their educational solutions to "others" who are viewed as recipients rather than equal partners in the endeavor.

Therefore, we are cautious about rhetoric concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion, asserting that these only have meaning when concomitant processes are genuinely embraced to avoid further marginalizing the marginalized.

In this book, voices from the margins are made central, voices that ask important questions, such as...

- Is the open education movement even a single movement? If so, what binds it together?

- What does it mean for something to be open? Who gets to decide what is "open" enough? Or for whom it is open?
- Can one use closed means to achieve open ends?
- Should some things never be open? If so, how are these things determined?
- How can one reconcile concerns about data privacy, particularly when concerning student data, against a desire to promote open scholarship and open pedagogy?
- How can one ensure that accessibility is not forgotten during conversations about access?
- How can one reconcile the rights and agency of authors against specific open licensing requirements attached to OER-related grants?
- What academic labor issues are currently obscured in the open education movement, and how can OER and OEP paradigms and initiatives resist the exploitation of academic labor?
- How can one ensure that the movement does not fall prey to blind techno-solutionism?
- Can a primary obligation to shareholders ever be reconciled with a duty to students?

These are important questions, critical in both senses of the word. However, they have rarely been articulated, debated, or welcomed into the foreground. Which brings us to this volume, which seeks to center these discussions, acknowledging and openly addressing the serious pitfalls of open education that can derail its great promise.

Our Curation Process

> "When we think this question "who appears?" we are asked a question about how spaces are occupied by certain bodies who get so used to their occupation that they don't even notice it... To question who appears is to become the cause of discomfort. It is almost as if we have a duty not to notice who turns up and who doesn't" – Sara Ahmed (2013, para. 9)

We, the curators of this work, are based in five countries (Canada, Egypt, Ireland, South Africa and the United States) and, added to our own regional diversity, we sought to curate diverse critical voices in open education. Any such curation will always be *partial*: incomplete and subjective (Ellsworth, 1989) and we therefore make explicit our process here, and suggest that the curation before you is a first attempt and is open to future updating with newer articles or older articles that come to our attention in future years. In the spirit of our open license, we are interested in offering this work to the commons to encourage others to improve our work, identify our blind spots, and continue the conversation we are outlining here.

The diversity we seek here includes:

- **Author diversity**: Voices which may be considered marginal to the dominant hegemony, offering critical perspectives on open education. This includes authors from both the global south and global

north, women, authors of color, LGBTQ authors, authors from a range of contexts such as libraries and K-12, independent scholars, and student authors, even though the majority will be from higher ed (a group that often has the privilege and luxury to write). We limited our choices to no more than one single-authored contribution per author.

- **Topic diversity**: Articles (and a few other media such as audio and video) that tackle a variety of issues in open education, especially through non-traditional lenses. So even while some authors here address overlapping topics, we have chosen pieces that examine issues through new or complementary lenses. While choice of topic and text are subjective, we sought consensus amongst the five of us on each one, then offered authors the choice to pick an alternative if they preferred. We acknowledge that all of us, despite our geographic diversity, have similar core values and stances about critical open education and have co-authored and co-presented together, and been part of the same community on multiple levels. This means there may be entire communities outside of our own that we are unaware of, particularly, for example, non-English-speaking scholars of open education.

- **Informal pieces rather than peer-reviewed pieces**, as such pieces already have findability and visibility within the journals and books that house them. Another reason is that sometimes marginalized authors publish less frequently in peer-reviewed spaces. Finally, by choosing shorter pieces, we offer readers an opportunity to read a wider variety of authors and perspectives in a short amount of time, and the choice to then dig deeper into the authors' work on their own.

- **Already available with an open license** or easily made available with an open license (e. g. an author can give us permission without needing publisher permission).

- **Available in English**: For this first curation, the articles shared are in English, but in future we may include material in other languages and have it translated. We encourage others to recommend articles in other languages, and to translate works in this collection to other languages as well, within the permissions of each piece.

We want to reiterate that we treat this collection as a starting point towards curating and centering marginal voices and non-dominant epistemic stances in open education, rather than a complete and definitive collection. We share our labor of love in this moment due to the urgency of providing such a collection, recognizing that such work is never "done", that there will always be additional voices to add, and over time, new stances to include. We invite readers to use the open licensing on this work to adapt and expand this collection, and we hope to be able to update our curation every few years.

The collection which follows is organised simply by date, with articles from April 2013 to November 2019.

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Attribution

1.

INEQUITABLE POWER DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE MUST BE CONFRONTED HEAD ON

Laura Czerniewicz

Originally published on April 29, 2013

Showing "The World of Science", this map representing global scholarly publishing as expressed through science journals' publishing in the mid 2000s. It makes a dramatic point about the complexities of global inequalities in knowledge production and exchange. What would it take to redraw the knowledge production map to realise a vision of a more equitable and accurate world of knowledge?

World scaled by number of documents in Web of Science by Authors Living There
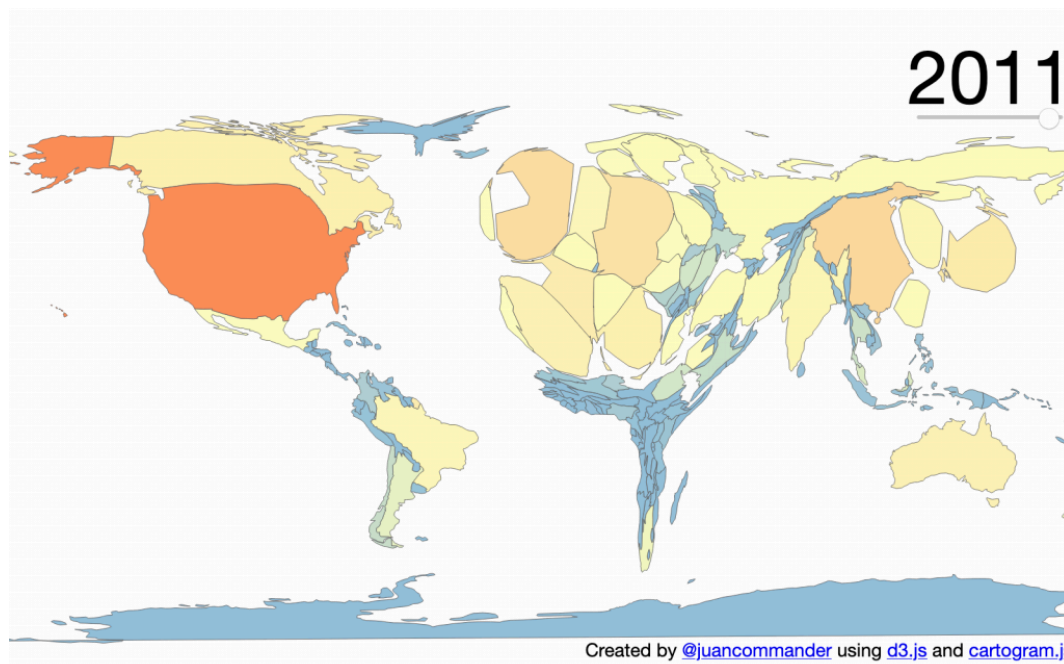
Disparities

Knowledge creation and dissemination are, of course, crucially shaped by the practicalities of money and technology. It is significant that the average R& D intensity (R&D as a percentage of GDP) for OECD countries was 2.4% in 2009, while few developing countries had reached 1% ([Mjwara et al 2013](#)). These percentages of national funds are important differentiators in what is possible; without comparable levels of support researchers in resource-poor environments must spend inordinate amounts of time fundraising and dealing with external grant-giving organisations, are limited in their ability to participate in scholarly community activities, and so are often constrained in the research they can undertake. Infrastructure also shapes what is possible; for example [maps of internet cable](#) clearly show how collaboration between those in the global north is enabled by substantial bandwidth while north-south and south-south connections are not.

Values and practices

These technical, financial and even mechanical issues are easy to identify, and so it is tempting to put one's faith in the idea that more money and machines will solve the problems of knowledge production inequality. Values and practices – which legitimate certain interests and not others – contribute just as much to global imbalances as material disparities do. The positioning of these science journals is not neutral: engagement with them is characterised by several levels of uneven participation. They operate within a discourse in which "international" really means "global north". This paradigm is reinforced by the strong reliance on the ISI Impact Factor, leading to an anomalous situation in which researchers from the global South must tailor their research to be of interest to high impact journals serving a Northern research agenda.

For example, a study of four high impact journals in the management social sciences found that they attracted authors from many countries but their empirical sites of investigation were significantly located in Europe and North America (Hamman, R. *Balancing the academic terms of trade: The paradox of publishing in top-tier journals from the periphery.* unpublished, available from author). This indicates the extent to which local researchers will use their scarce resources to achieve publication in the high impact journals, supposedly international. Given the overall constrained research environments in which these researchers operate, these resources are lost to local research needs, and may in effect subsidise the research of the global north. Ironically, at the same time, relatively well resourced researchers from the global north undertake research in developing countries and publish in those same "international" journals. In the worst cases, the global south simply provides novel empirical sites, and local academics may not become equal partners in these projects about their own contexts.

Researchers in the global south are caught in a double bind. They are rewarded for publishing in international journals in several ways: through promotions, and sometimes even financially (in South Africa, for example, universities receive well over US$1000 from the National Department of Higher Education and Training for every article published on accredited lists (and in most of universities a percentage of this "reward"

goes directly to the authors). At the same time, development imperatives and government policies pressurise researchers to undertake research relevant to pressing social and related problems which may not be appealing enough (or even "academic" enough) to interest the international journals. One scholar thus noted wryly that, "African scholars face a critical choice between sacrificing relevance for recognition, or recognition for relevance" (Nyamnjoh 2010, p.69).

Another problem not captured by the journals map is that it measures science journal articles as the sole representation of scientific research output, whereas there are other valid forms of outputs which also report research findings. Obvious examples in the scholarly community are monographs and edited collections. While the map portrays science research, it interprets this narrowly, and fails to include the social sciences and humanities which continue to value books in all forms, both digital and in hard copy. Also, in many contexts valid research is undertaken and published with the unfortunate name of "grey literature"- in the form of working papers, technical reports, policy reports, etc. These genres of research output are often prevalent in research areas focused on pressing development issues. In South Africa it is instructive to consider, for example, the outputs of research organisations such as PLAAS (Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies) and SALDRU (South African Labour Development Research Unit), whose prolific, robust and internationally-recognised output would be poorly reflected on the map above. The usual rejoinder to the inclusion of such research is the question of quality; but the answer lies not in rejecting these forms of outputs but in finding ways to prove their worth whether through new mechanisms of peer review, or through new metrics which measure impact and value through use and re-use, not just citations in the same coterie of journals from which many are excluded in the first place.

Another category of "invisible research" from the South is the considerable output commissioned by government and undertaken by consultants, many of whom are practising academics. Even when published, this kind of research is often not attributed to its actual authors. It has the added problem of often being embargoed, with researchers even having to sign confidentiality agreements or "official secrets acts" when they are given grants. This is especially bizarre in an era where the mantra of publically funded research being made available to the public has become increasingly accepted.

From access to participation

Yet another snag that is surfaced in the knowledge outputs represented in the map above is that they generally reside behind paywalls and can only be reached by people with access to expensive academic databases. This excludes those who cannot afford to pay for it, i.e., researchers in resource-constrained environments, and members of the general public who do not have passwords for the electronic facilities of universities and research institutions. This situation has changed substantially as the open access policies that are currently percolating in the system in the EU, the UK and other countries are implemented over the next few years. This has substantially increased the volume of research to which scholars and readers all over the world have access, and undoubtedly makes an important contribution to research. Ironically, however, the danger of this

more ubiquitous availability is that without similar national and regional policies in the developing world, and without resources being made available to actively support open dissemination in these countries, many types of research from the developing world will be rendered even more invisible. This may unwittingly consolidate the erroneous impression that these scholars are undertaking little of value, have little to contribute to global knowledge and are reliant on the intellectual capacity of the global north.

In conclusion, to redraw the map of global knowledge production, the inequitable global power dynamics of global knowledge production and exchange must be confronted head on. Funding and infrastructure must be improved, perceptions of "science" must be broadened to encompass the social sciences, research outputs need to be recognised as existing beyond the boundaries of the formal journal article, incentives and reward systems need to be adjusted to encourage the legitimation of the new fairer practices more possible by the affordances of a digitally networked world. And finally, the open access movement needs to broaden its focus from *access to* knowledge to full *participation in* knowledge creation and in scholarly communication.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the Author

Professor Laura Czerniewicz is the Director of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), at the University of Cape Town, CILT's first director when it was formed in 2014. She has worked in education in a number of roles with a continuous focus on inequality, access and digital inequality. These have permeated her research interests which include the changing nature of higher education in a digitally-mediated society as well as student and academic technological practices. She is currently the South African lead on an ESRC NRF funded project on the [Unbundled University](#), researching emerging models of teaching and learning provision.

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An NRF-rated researcher, Laura has published widely, both formally and informally. Her research output can be found at http://uct.academia.edu/LauraCzerniewicz and many of her presentations at https://www.slideshare.net/laura_Cz. She can be followed on Twitter at [@czernie](#).

For an interview with Laura Czerniewicz listen to her podcast with Mark Nicols at http://onlinelearninglegends.com/podcast/007-professor-laura-czerniewicz/.

Attribution

3

2.

FROM "OPEN" TO JUSTICE

Audrey Watters

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Here are the transcript and slides from the talk I gave this morning at [OpenCon 2014](). I was a little nervous as to how well this would be received — nothing like challenging the meaning of a word that makes up the title of the conference.
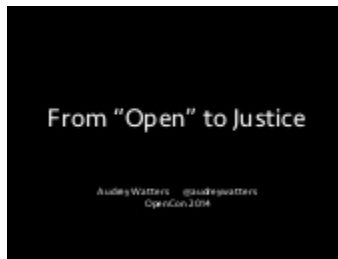
A SlideShare element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=130

This is one of my most popular tweets:

> *Openwashing: n., having an appearance of open-source and open-licensing for marketing purposes, while continuing proprietary practices.*

It hasn't gone viral by any means. But the two-and-a-half-year-old observation is resurfaced and retweeted pretty regularly.

I think the tweet resonated in part because we readily understand what "open washing" means through what we know about the word's antecedents: "greenwashing," "pinkwashing," "whitewashing." We recognize with

these terms that industry forces are quick to wrap themselves in language and imagery in the hopes it makes them appear more palatable, more friendly, more progressive. More "green," for example, more "open."

My tweet also gets at some of the frustrations that many of us experience when we see the word "open" used to describe things we feel are not "open" at all. It's a reflection of the ongoing challenges — conflicts even — that any "open" movement faces both internally and externally, as to what exactly is meant when that word is used.

And that's the thing. The definition and designation of "open" is fraught. Incredibly so. Even among those of us who consider ourselves advocates for openness in some form or another, we still scrap over which what counts as really truly "open."

In fairness, my tweet about "openwashing" wasn't aimed at the debates about AGPL3 or Attribution-Non Commercial. It was a subtweet, if you will, a reference to the learning management system Blackboard's acquisition of Moodlerooms and Netspot, two companies that help provide support and deployment services for schools that use the open-source LMS Moodle. "Ours is no mere dalliance with open source," the company said. "Openwashing," I muttered under my breath.

Blackboard is hardly alone here. In education technology — my field, that is — I can list for you any number of examples of companies and organizations that have attached that word "open" to their products and services: OpenClass, an learning management system built by Pearson, the largest education company in the world and one of the largest publishers of proprietary textbooks. I don't know what "open" refers to there in OpenClass. The Open Education Alliance — an industry group founded by the online education startup Udacity. I don't know what "open" refers to there in the Open Education Alliance. The startup Open English, an online

English-language learning site and one of the most highly funded startups in the last few years. I don't know what "open" refers to there in Open English.

All these append "open" to a name without really even trying to append "openness," let alone embrace "openness," to their practices or mission. Whatever "openness" means.

Let me repeat that, because it's important: whatever "openness" means.

Does "open" mean openly licensed content or code? And, again, which license is really "open"? Does "open" mean "made public"? Does "open" mean shared? Does "open" mean "accessible"? Accessible how? To whom? Does "open" mean editable? Negotiable? Does "open" mean "free"? Does "open" mean "open-ended"? Does "open" mean transparent? Does "open" mean "open-minded"? "Open" to new ideas and to intellectual exchange? Open to interpretation? Does "open" mean open to participation — by everyone equally? Open doors? Open opportunity? Open to suggestion? Or does it mean "open for business"?
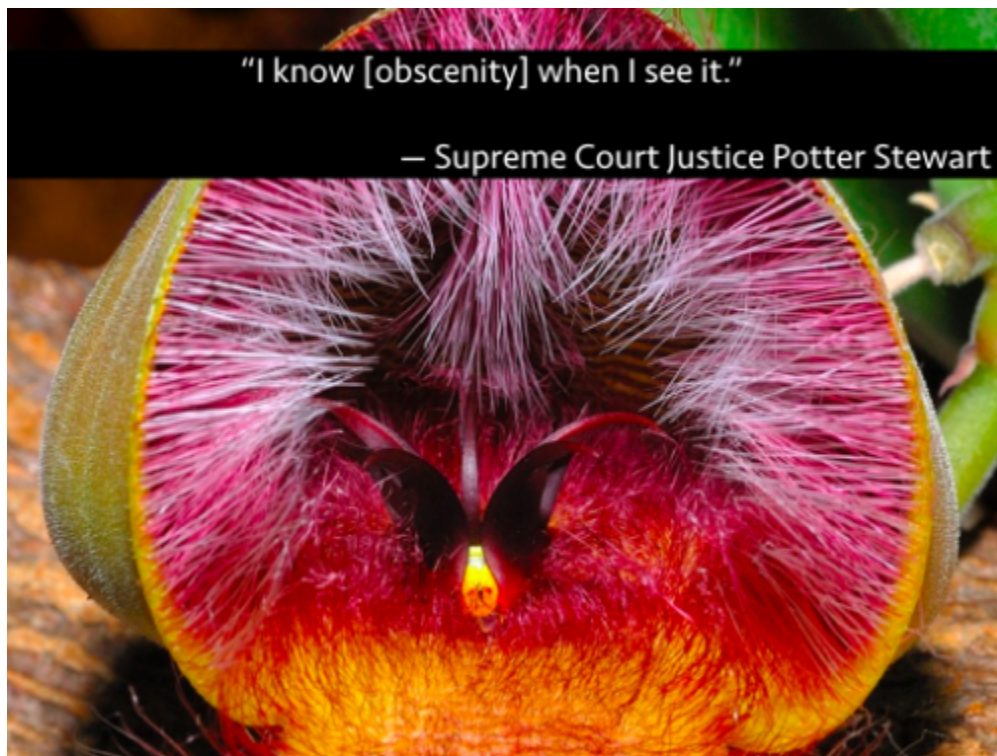
That's the problem. "Open" means all those things. And on one hand, multivalence is good. Having many meanings, many interpretations can be a strength. On the other hand, it's a weakness when the term becomes so widely applied that it is rendered meaningless. I worry often that that's what we're faced with. "Open" has ended up being a bit like Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's famous assertion that "I know [obscenity] when I see it." That is, we hear a lot of "I know 'open' when I see it" sorts of claims. If those of us who work within "open" efforts cannot always agree on what that adjective means, how do we expect others to? Should we expect others to?

I've actually come to believe, in the two plus years since I tweeted my critique of "openwashing," that the

answer here isn't actually a clearer definition of "open"; the answer isn't more fights for a more rigid adherence to a particular license, good grief no.

I think the answer is more transparency about our politics. I think, in fact, the answer is politics.

We act — at our peril — as if "open" is politically neutral, let alone politically good or progressive. Indeed, we sometimes use the word to stand in place of a politics of participatory democracy. We presume that, because something is "open" that it necessarily contains all the conditions for equality or freedom or justice. We use "open" as though it is free of ideology, ignoring how much "openness," particularly as it's used by technologists, is closely intertwined with "meritocracy" — this notion, a false one, that "open" wipes away inequalities, institutions, biases, history, that "open" "levels the playing field."

If we believe in equality, if we believe in participatory democracy and participatory culture, if we believe in people and progressive social change, if we believe in sustainability in all its environmental and economic and psychological manifestations, then we need to do better than slap that adjective "open" onto our projects and act as though that's sufficient or — and this is hard, I know — even sound.

I want to make an argument here today that we need to be more explicit about these politics. We can't pretend like "open" is going to do that work for us. In fact, we need to recognize: it might not be doing that work at all.

From Open Data to Information Justice

In particular, I want to examine at how "open" is invoked around education data, and I want to suggest that instead of a push for more "open data" in education, we need to instead — this is a phrase I am borrowing from Utah Valley University researcher Jeffrey Alan Johnson — to push for "information justice."

When we talk about "opening" education data, I'd argue that we always have to tread very carefully.

Education data lives in this tricky and powerful in-between space; as it is both-and. That is, it is often data generated at and collected by publicly-funded institutions. It is also deeply personal data, if not legally protected private data. Furthermore, the data that is collected often fulfills institutional needs, rather than learners'. That collection is often compelled, for reasons that might be progressive, and for politics that might not be.

And now, thanks to the proliferation of educational technologies, the sorts of data and the compulsions to collect it are increasing.

The push for more education data collection is not new. Not remotely. The National Center for Education Statistics has existed since 1867, when Congress passed legislation providing "That there shall be established at the City of Washington, a department of education, for the purpose of collecting such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several States and Territories, and of diffusing such information respecting the organization and management of schools and school systems, and methods of teaching, as shall aid the people of the United States in the establishment and maintenance of efficient school systems, and otherwise promote the cause of education throughout the country." Over a hundred years before there was a Department of Education, that is, the federal government was collecting education data.

Data is disciplinary

As such local, state, and federal governments, along with educational institutions themselves have long tracked "data" about students. Since the advent of No Child Left Behind under George W. Bush, data collection has become part of a larger disciplinary effort, to identify and punish "failing schools." And under Barack Obama's No Child Left Behind policy, the data collection has only continued, an effort that dovetails quite nicely with

schools' increasing adoption of computer technologies and, as such, students' increasing generation of "data exhaust."

The current administration is interested in more than just data at the school, district, and state level. It's actively promoting the collection and analysis of student at the individual level, arguing that if we just have more data — if we "open up" the classroom, the software, the databases, the educational practices — that we will unlock the secrets of how every student learns. We can then builds software that caters to that, something that will make learning more efficient and more personalized — or that's the argument at least. We should remember that this is mostly speculative. And we should recognize here that words like "personalization" function much like "open." That is, they sound great in press releases, but they should prompt us to ask more questions rather than assume that they're necessarily good.

In 2012, the Department of Education announced the Education Data Initiative, part of the larger Open Data Initiative that in its words will "'liberate' government data and voluntarily-contributed non-government data as fuel to spur entrepreneurship, create value, and create jobs while improving educational outcomes for students." That is, "open education data" isn't simply about citizens reviewing the success or failure or funding or outcomes of schools. It's not about shifting power, thanks to "openness," from the federal government — those data hoarders — to the people, to communities. To teachers, parents, students.

Nope.

It is, however, a shift in power.

InBloom: Doom

The push to "open" more education data has happened at the state level too. With a nod from the Council of Chief State School Officers (that is, an organization of state superintendents of education which has also been

a major strategic proponent of the recent Common Core State Standards), and funded with $100 million from the Carnegie Corporation and Gates Foundation, the Shared Learning Collaborative — later rebranded to inBloom — launched in 2011, promising to create a massive warehouse of student data that would be "open" to third-party developers.

The infrastructure would be open-source, replacing what is, in so many cases, an ailing infrastructure of often proprietary databases, applications, and systems that many school school districts work with to manage students' records.

And here, immediately, we can see the some of the problems with "open." Because the code for InBloom was meant to be open source, it does offer some leverage against the proprietary infrastructure that most schools are saddled with: Pearson PowerSchool or eScholar for starters. Ideally, thanks open source, any school could install the inBloom codebase and be free of the inBloom organization and all its attachments to News Corp (that's who wrote a great deal of the code), to the Gates Foundation (that's who funded the project), and so on.

But then what? Open source doesn't actually get us out of the conundrum that is education data collection. Open source doesn't opt you out of reporting mandates, for example. Indeed, "open" might put us farther into the weeds.

InBloom's data specification included hundreds of data points about students — enough to make parents and privacy groups balk about what exactly what being collected and shared and why. It probably didn't help that some of the development work was done by Wireless Generation, a company that had been acquired by News Corporation — right in the middle of that company's phone hacking scandal. And it probably didn't help when those in education technology make ridiculously triumphant claims about all the data-mining they plan to do.

Take, for example, the CEO of Knewton, which is a company that promises to take student data and provide "adaptive" pathways through textbook lessons, pronouncing that "We literally know everything about what you know and how you learn best, everything." Knewton boasts that it gathers millions of data points on millions of children each day. He calls education "the world's most data-mineable industry by far." "We have five orders of magnitude more data about you than Google has," the Knewton CEO said at a Department of Education "Datapalooza" event. "We literally have more data about our students than any company has about anybody else about anything, and it's not even close."

The argument — espoused by the Department of Education, handily doing the bidding of administration and administrative fetishes for data as well as the bidding of education technology companies like Knewton and inBloom and others — the argument is that more data works in the service of "better education," that the problem that schools have long faced stem, in part, from a failure to collect and make use of data.

Data is kept in silos — in spreadsheets, in student information systems, in handwritten grade books — so the story goes (I believe that story), and therefore there hasn't been a way to understand each child (that's bullshit), to see a full data profile of a particular student, let alone create algorithms and software best suited to move that student through school.

Again, the collection of education data isn't new. Indeed, inBloom used a data model that was based in part upon SIF — the schools interoperability framework — a specification that is over a decade old. What was new here was the push to have this data be "open" more easily to third party developers and not simply the one company that won the contract for the student information system and the government.

But to challenge inBloom and others in education technology who are interested in educational data collection and data-mining, we need to do more than raise red flags about privacy. That's been the loudest complaint. A parent-led effort did just that, successfully organizing protests in the states and districts that were piloting the inBloom technology. One by one, these customers backed out. Louisiana. Colorado. New York. Illinois. By April of this year, inBloom had no customers left, and it announced that it was closing its doors. $100 million. For what it's worth, some of the code is available on Github.

Data is not neutral

But I want to raise more questions about the data itself. Data is not neutral. Data — its collection, storage, retrieval, usage — is not neutral. There can be, as Jeffrey Alan Johnson argues, "injustices embedded in the data itself," and when we "open data," it does not necessarily ameliorate these. In fact, open data might serve to reinscribe these, to reinforce privilege in no small part because data, open or not, is often designed around meeting the needs around businesses and institutions and not around citizens, or in this case students.

What "counts" as education data? Let's start there. What do schools collect?

As I said earlier, the inBloom data spec included hundreds of data points. A small sampling: Academic Honors, Attendance Type, Behavior Incident Type, Career Pathway, Disability Type, Disciplinary Action, Grade Point Average, Incident Location, Personal Information Verification Type, Reason for Restraint, Eligibility for Free or Reduced School Lunch, Special Accommodation, Student Characteristic, Weapon Type.

I think it's clear, as I list these, that the moments when students generate "education data" is, historically, moments when they come into contact with the school and more broadly the school and the state as a disciplinary system. We need to think more critically, more carefully about what it means to open up this data — data that is often mandated by the state to be collected — to others, to businesses. Again, is "open data" about liberating data, as the Department of Education suggests, "to spur entrepreneurship, create value, and create jobs while improving educational outcomes for students"

As Johnson argues, "the opening of data can function as a tool of disciplinary power. Open data enhances the capacity of disciplinary systems" — and school certainly functions as one of those — "to observe and evaluate institutions' and individuals' conformity to norms that become the core values and assumptions of the institutional system whether or not they reflect the circumstances of those institutions and individuals."

Did you speak out of turn in class? Are you a child of an illegal immigrant? Did you get written up for wearing a halter top? Are you pregnant? Did you miss school? Why? Why? Why?

What classes did you take? What grades did you make? Why? Why? Why?

(Is the answer to "why" a data point? And — here's the rub — is that "data point" ever connected to an ethics of care or a sense of social justice?)

Education data often highlights the ways in which we view students as objects not as subjects of their own learning. I'll repeat my refrain: education data is not neutral. Opening education data does not necessarily benefit students or schools Or communities; it does not benefit all students, all schools, all communities equally. Open source education data warehouses are not neutral. And similarly, the source code does not benefit students equally.

We need meaningful political engagement, care and justice.

Not simply (empty?) adjectives that purport to do that work for us

If we are to move, as Johnson suggests we do, from "open data" to "information justice," we cannot depend on technology alone. Nor can we rely on that word "open" to serve as the metric by which we evaluate our practices and policies. This isn't an argument for "closed" or "proprietary" systems. Not by any stretch. It's an argument for building capacity and agency. We need to consider, for example, what data looks like in communities' hands, in students' hands, what information students would want to collect on themselves, for themselves, who they would want to share it with and why. And in doing so, we need to recognize the messiness of our learning — of our data — and not normalize that for the sake of analysis, not open it — counterintuitively I recognize — for the sake of control.

Read this way, "openwashing" signals something else. Something I find just as frightening as a corporation's innovation of "open" as an adjective to describe their latest, clearly "not open" project.

What happens when something is "open" in all the ways that open education and open source and open data advocates would approve. All the right open licenses. All the right levels of accessibility. All the right nods from all the right powerful players within "open."

And yet, the project is still not equitable. What if, in fact, it's making it worse.

What are we going to do when we recognize that "open" is not enough. I hope, that we recognize that what we need is social justice. We need politics, not simply a license. We need politics, not simply technology solutions. We need an ethics of care, of justice, not simply assume that "open" does the work of those for us.

About the Author

Audrey Watters is a writer and independent scholar who focuses on education technology – its politics and its pedagogical implications. Although she was two chapters into her Comparative Literature dissertation, she decided to abandon academia, and she now happily fulfills the one job recommended to her by a junior high aptitude test: freelance writer. She has written for The Baffler, The Atlantic, Vice, Edutopia, Hybrid Pedagogy, Inside Higher Ed, and elsewhere across the Web, but she is best known for her work on her own website Hack Education.

Attribution

3.

THE FALLACY OF "OPEN"

sava saheli singh

[This is the text (and slides) of the presentation I gave at the [HASTAC 2015 conference](#) in East Lansing in May 2015. Please note that many links will take you directly to a pdf of the article referenced.]

Open has been a popular concept and approach to many things from open data and open science, to open education. Yet, this shift to open as a democratizing or accessible approach to education often lacks critical

interrogation. My work and public scholarship over the past 5 years has centered on digital citizenship, trust, and surveillance, and this piece assesses some ideas and questions about what we think of as "open" and what we're meant to think of as "open" and the ramifications of both of these positions. This piece was written in 2015, and a lot has changed since then, but these considerations remain important to any project that wants to be open.

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A note about my slides: I asked my Twitter community to tell me what "open" meant to them, and I will be showing some of those responses. Apologies to those whose tweets were not included here. All tweets were used with permission.

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There are some commonly used concepts in the "open" world:

- *Open access*: is access to scholarly work, freeing it from being behind paywalls.
- *Open source*: is free access to software and hardware, increasing potential for collaborative programming and creating hardware components.
- *Open data*: is free access to data, making it easier for the public to potentially understand larger patterns in specific contexts, and increasing transparency in use of said data.
- *Open content*: is free access to online content for reuse, revision, remix, and redistribution.

Open in all these contexts talks about *access to* rather than a way of being, but when we partake in any of these contexts, we're often expected to be *open*. We can already see the built-in divides and the somewhat misleading implication of "access". For example, open data implies access to certain kinds of data, but without knowledge of how to use that data or what to do with it, it being "open" is of little use to us.

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When "they" created the internet, and I'm simplifying things a little here, it was with a view to creating an open and democratic space which would allow for the free exchange of ideas. While this is one of the things that happened, sadly, it's not the only thing that happened. We reminisce about the "good old days of the internet" which was about 15 years ago, when things seemed simpler and friendlier, and now we reminisce about the social media of 5 years ago, when things seemed simpler and friendlier. 5 years! That isn't even a blip in time!

So what is the difference between social media, then and now? The number of people? The kinds of conversations? The features of the platforms? Being able to talk about the good old days of social media is in itself a privilege. We yearn for the days when our privilege meant we had a particular kind of access to things. And now that everyone has access to those things, they've ruined our fun. How Twitter and other social media platforms were designed and how that design has changed over time has had a huge impact on how we interact with each other — some good, many bad. With increasing attention to data privacy, surveillance capitalism, and how this data is being used against us (granted this is a different conversation, see: Chris Gilliard, Safiya Noble, Simone Browne, Ben Williamson, David Murakami Wood, Shoshana Zuboff, Valerie Steeves, Kirtstie Ball, David Lyon, and many many more), it is paramount to remember that these platforms were designed with specific people in mind, and those people were rarely people of color, minorities, women, or marginalized folks. And, sadly, these are the people who are most often harmed by the very openness that they're meant to embrace.

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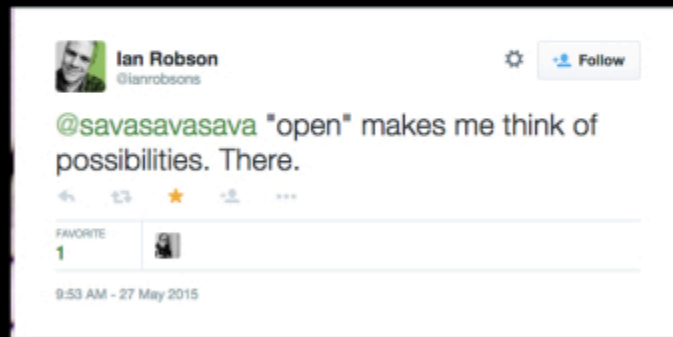
Social networking platforms make it easy to share and reshare things — links, ideas, comments, research — and also find community around shared values or interests. As George Veletsianos found, these online spaces provide academics a perfect setting to share their work, and in fact, "sharing" is considered a virtue, and possibly a virtue that adds to an individual's social capital and online currency. This idea is also supported by Christina Costa's work on the Participatory Web as a space for collaboration and sharing. Costa uses the collective term "Participatory Web" to mean,

> ... a set of digital communicating networks, applications, and environments on which individuals act as active participants, contributors, and co-creators of information, knowledge, and opinions,

which contribute to what she refers to as the habitus of digital scholars.

With the advent of the internet, some might consider academic identity as an important part of an academic CV. Scholars and academics who demonstrate an understanding of the online world bring to their positions that added advantage. There are those academics who have a robust online presence, one that is either carefully cultivated, or curated in such a way that the community they have created reflects who they are. Often, because of online identities, academics have access to opportunities that otherwise might have passed them by. Invitations to collaborate, access to online publishing, networking, and even access to senior academics one

would normally never be able to talk to. Some academics take the trouble to groom their online identity in such a way as to appear more desirable and well-connected, increasing their chances at job opportunities.

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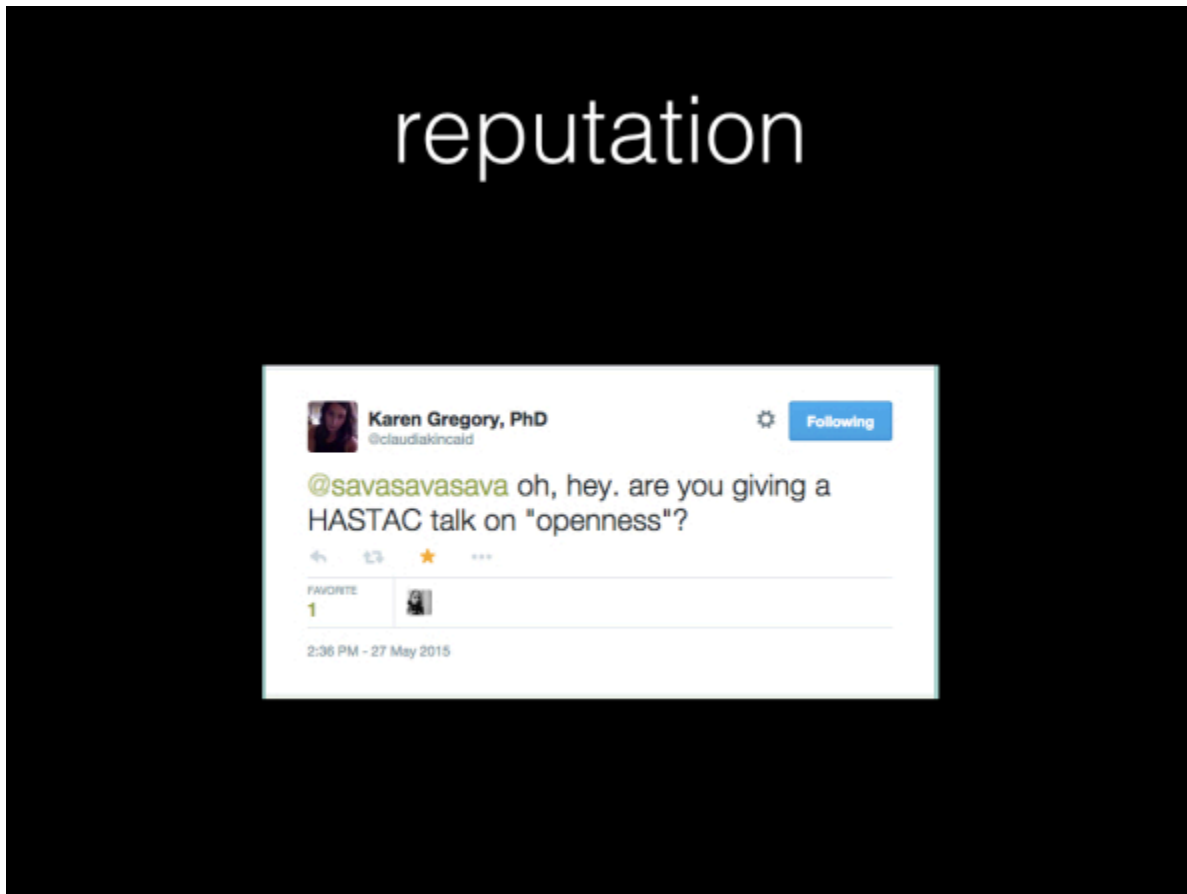
[John Willinsky referred to this as the "reputational economy"](#), where reputation is currency with the academy, in which

> ...reputation in academic life controls the production, consumption, and distribution of this public good known as research and scholarship.

He notes that we need to reassess scholarly reputations given the rise in use and popularity of the digital element of scholarly communication, especially with things like open access. [Bonnie Stewart notes](#) that scholars cultivate a type of reputation and influence on Twitter that is different from traditional academia and that they are,

> ... engaged in curating and contributing resources to a broader "conversation" in their field or area of interest rather than merely promoting themselves or their work.

While building networks, users learn to recognize valuable connections and to weed out the 'noise' or

unwanted information and people. [Judith Donath compared this to signaling theory](#)—originally from economics and biology—as the

> ... relationship between signals and qualities, showing why certain signals are more reliable and others are not.

Taking an example from Twitter, hashtags can be thought of as signaling identity units[*], and identifying with particular hashtags can mean access to important connections and a resource-rich community.

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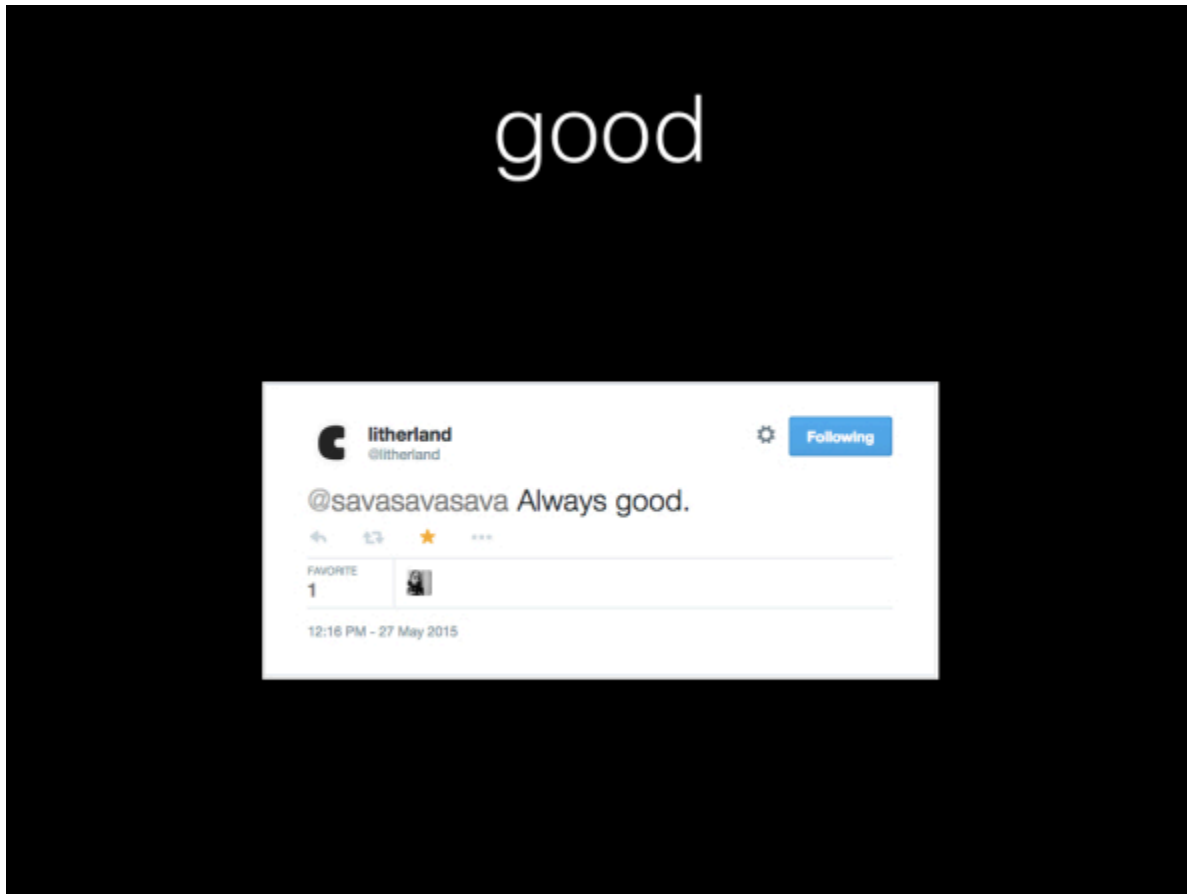
Let's talk about scholarship in the open. There are multiple articles and tweets and blogposts about the virtues of conducting one's scholarship in the open. And they all give good advice! But it's good advice for some people, not everyone.

The internet affords a type of open scholarship in which scholars can use blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms to think out loud and elicit feedback from peers. Doing so can yield surprising results, such as [Jessie Daniels' experience](#) of tweeting about a topic, those tweets and the conversation around those tweets grew into a series of blog posts, and those posts and discussions around them led to a peer-reviewed journal article. It is a perfect example of what it means to be a scholar in the digital age—the very nature of scholarship and process of scholarly work can look completely different from traditional academic models of scholarship.

[Martin Weller has talked about](#) urging institutions to reward digital scholarship and even include it during tenure review. He identifies two good reasons for why academic institutions should recognize and reward digital scholarship:

1. support for scholars who produce work online signals to other members of the institution that being digital is a desirable and rewardable activity, and
2. as a way to foster innovation within the institution itself.

I have been given various opportunities and made valuable connections because of how open I was online. I reaped the benefits of this openness, but was also aware of how I came about those things, and how I had to put myself out there a little in order to come by them.

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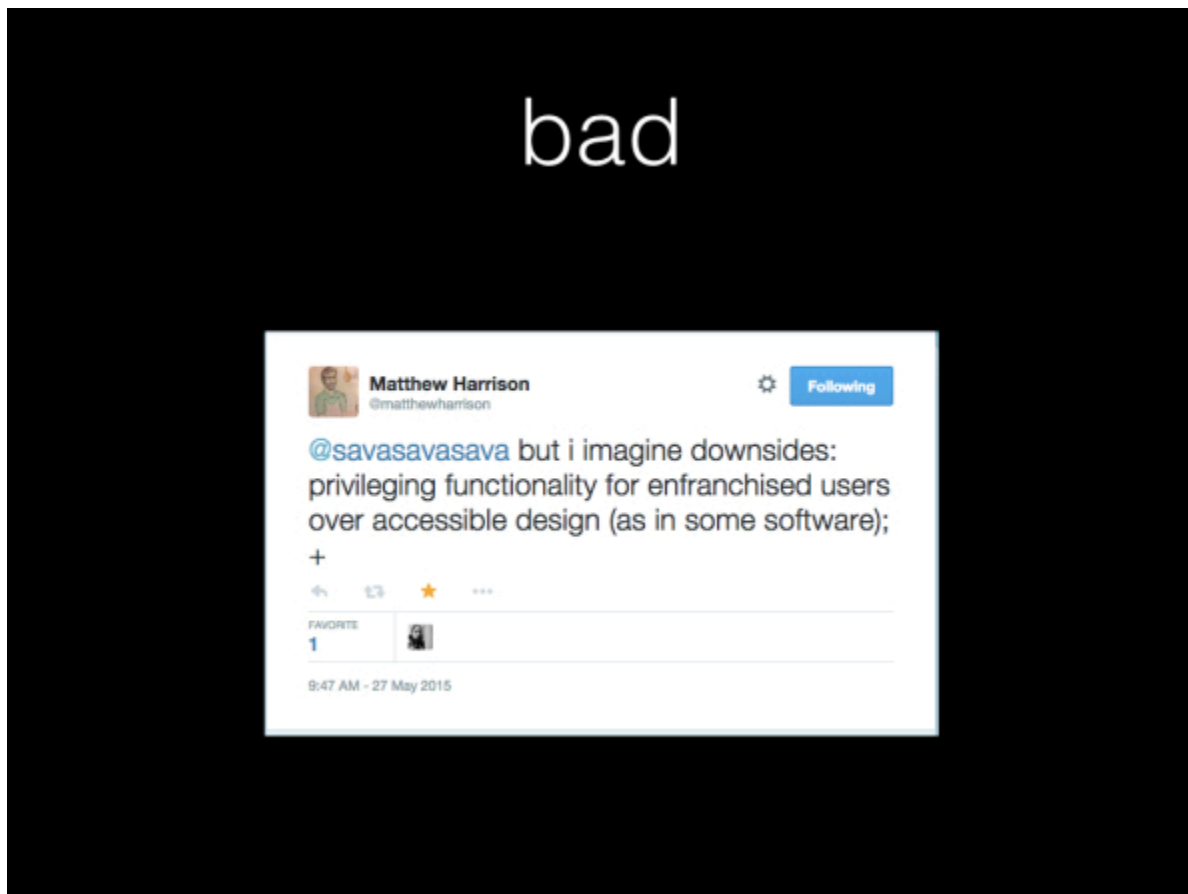
There are numerous examples of harm that has come from being "open" online, almost too many to list. Many might be familiar with more recent controversies, but I want to talk about a slightly older example of an academic kerfuffle (2012 is now considered old!) in what came to be [known](#) [as#twittergate](#). Some of us might remember it, but a quick recap: #twittergate referred to what I understood to be reservations about live-tweeting academic conferences, and the many reactions—positive and negative—to these reservations.

I bring up this example because it highlights some interesting points about "open" in the context of the academy, and how things like social media are pushing those boundaries. Academic conferences are thought of as both "open" places and "closed" spaces. They are attended by our peers and are where we share new ideas and get feedback on those ideas. They're often a testing ground, if you will, for things a lot like what I'm doing now. Academic conferences are also traditionally open fora, but only insofar as our immediate communities and disciplines are concerned, given the ability or support for travel and registration fees. With social media like Twitter, this "open" forum gets more open, in a sense. The communities that tune in are often just extensions of the communities present physically — mostly academic, but livetweeting also makes these conferences accessible to those who may be interested but not in academia and those who cannot attend in person.

A lot of the commentary about this issue supported livetweeting, but called for being respectful of what presenters might prefer. What's interesting is that we don't even really think about this any more. Like it's fine to livetweet now, it's expected, even required. But the thing that struck me during it all, was that not as many people considered who might be harmed by this behavior. A lot of the focus was on academics who were thought of as somewhat "old school", paranoid, and possibly privileged, rather than on those academics who were more junior, conducting sensitive research, or just preferred not to be broadcast in that way. Personally, I am conflicted about this issue. And perhaps it is a non-issue now, but still something we should consider.

And there are more examples. Many more. Friends who have been open about their feelings, opinions, and work have been on the receiving end of a barrage of hate and abuse, to the extent of being afraid for their lives. This is not the "democratic" internet or social media we were promised.

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We touched on networked scholarship a little earlier and I want to talk about it a little more. We're all here as part of a network of scholars, namely [HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory)](), which "... is an interdisciplinary community of humanists, artists, social scientists, scientists, and technologists changing the way we teach and learn." HASTAC is an amazing place for our network to share scholarship and have discussions around ideas and shared interests, but it's also a place where many scholars post their work and research. It's a community that respects its members, and I think this is partly because of how the community and platform are designed, and how membership is set up. It is not an open platform in the vein of Twitter, and it caters to a very specific community.

[Veletsianos and Kimmons call it]() "networked participatory scholarship" to provide a paradigm for the way in which scholars are using participatory online technologies to add to existing scholarly practices, and even bring them into the 21st century.

For example, social media platforms like Twitter afford further forms of peer review, and possibly even push the definition of "peer review". Scholars who discuss academic ideas and themes get a sort of early peer input on their work, which can then translate into early drafts of a larger work which they can share on Twitter and elicit further feedback, and finally submit the work to a formal academic journal after having already received a substantial degree of peer review and input. While Jessie Daniels' story from earlier is the most positive example of this sort of evolved and collaborative peer review, it will be interesting to see how this model develops.

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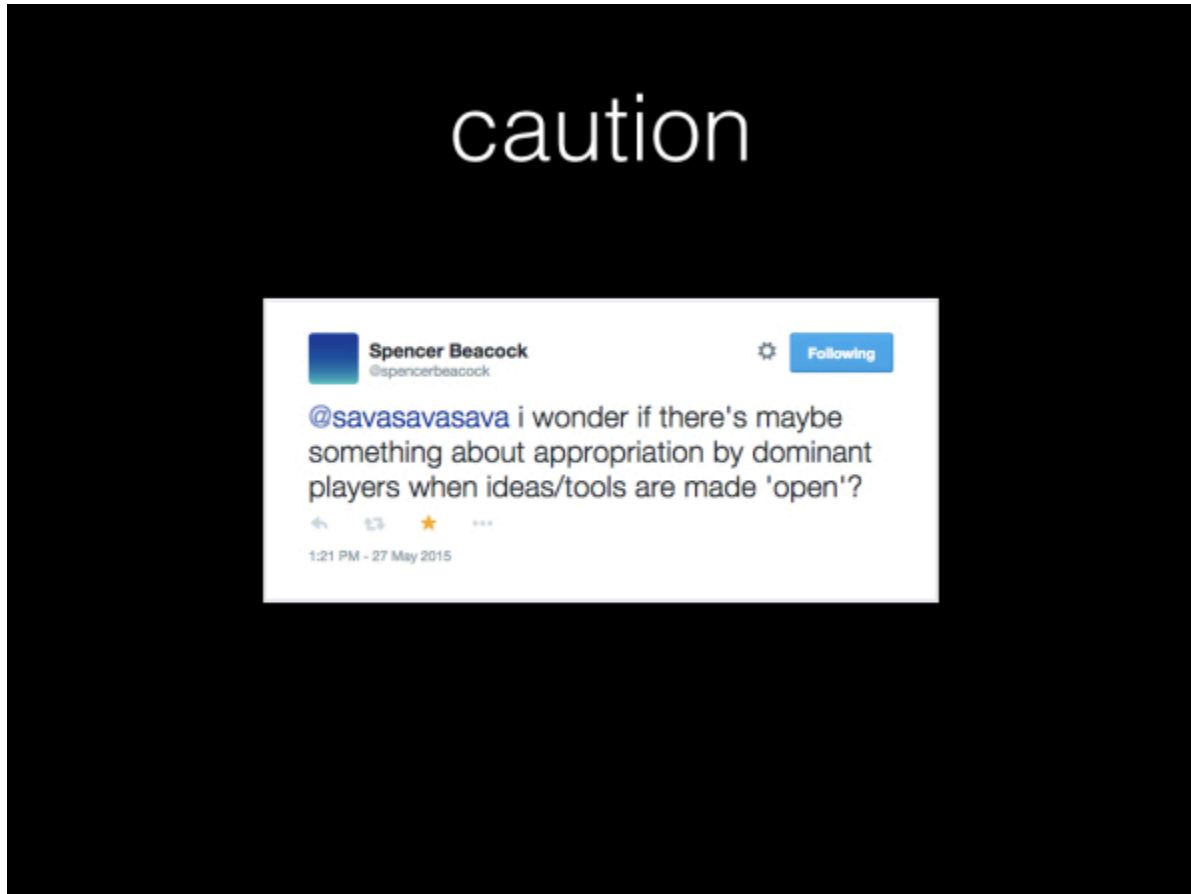
Veletsianos and Kimmons highlight the advantages of open scholarship, but also warn of the down sides of it, such as misappropriation, expectation of digital literacy, and the potential of openness creating inequalities within scholarly communities. Tressie McMillan Cottom points out the risks of online scholarship to scholars who are members of marginalized or minority groups. Scholars can feel pressured to take on open scholarship—either as a way to increase visibility for their own work or at the insistence of their academic institutions, Cottom says, but institutions should offer support to these scholars, especially if they are minorities, women, and junior scholars. While public scholarship can be vastly advantageous and beneficial to some, not all are prepared to face the kinds of discrimination and harassment the open web can bring to your door.

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So, open is not good for everyone, and tends to bias those in already privileged positions — race, class, gender. The hype around open, while well-intentioned, is also unintentionally putting many people in harm's way and they in turn end up having to endure so much. The people calling for open are often in positions of privilege, or have reaped the benefits of being open early on — when the platform wasn't as easily used for abuse, and when we were privileged to create the kinds of networks that included others like us.

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What are some of the things we can do to be more sensitive to those for whom "open" can mean harm? Some of these things may seem obvious or commonsensical, but they bear repeating because even I get swept up in things and lose sight of what's important for my community.

Interrogate platforms—We need to look closely at and be critical of the affordances and features of the platforms and online spaces we use, and point these out often.

Find workarounds—People often find ways to subvert systems to create safer spaces for themselves. When existing structures do not provide safety, we need to look at ways to work around the system in order to create those spaces.

Find and nurture community—It is in our interest to create a close-knit group of people who are easy to access when you need them. This doesn't mean creating closed communities of only your friends, but it does mean that you have a trusted few who you can turn to in times of need.

Push back—We need to take companies and platforms to task, especially those individuals or groups who create them. Software, platforms, and technology are NOT neutral. They are imbued with the biases of those who built them, regardless of whether they were coming from a good place or not.

Create inclusive spaces—We need to do the extra work to include more and diverse voices. We shouldn't be lazy and just reach into our echo chambers, but we need to do the hard work it takes to find people who can speak to different experiences when we build community, organize conferences, or even create an app.

Be self-reflexive — We need to take a long hard look at ourselves and our echo chambers. Echo chamber can be safe spaces — there is overlap here — but we need to be mindful of creating cliques and find the balance between these two.

Support your people — We must push for institutional buy-in for supporting members of our communities. We can work within our universities or educational institutions to put action plans in place and create guidelines for how to address online abuse, should it occur.

Be mindful of using tweets — Don't embed tweets. Just because they're public, this doesn't mean it's ok to embed a tweet without permission of the author, or even otherwise. Embedding a tweet increases the reach of the tweet and brings it to a different medium. it also makes accessing the author easier. In the same way, be careful of how you use storify. Taking tweets out of context can lead people to misinterpret meaning.

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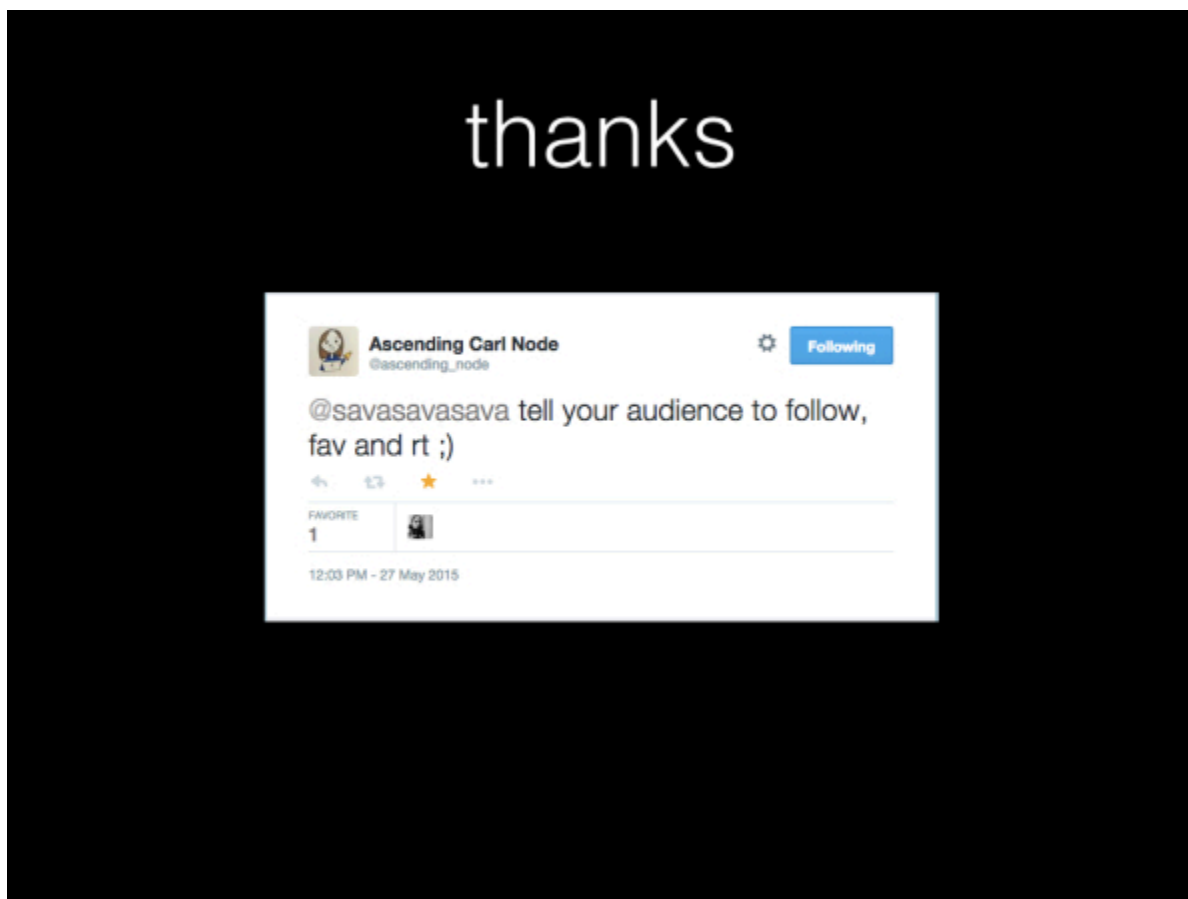
* *I say more about this in my dissertation on Academic Twitter and in a chapter in [Hashtag Publics, a collection edited by Nathan Rambukkana.](#)*

About the Author

sava is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Ottawa researching young people's relationship to technology and media. Previously, as a postdoctoral fellow with the Surveillance Studies Centre (SSC) at Queen's University, she conceptualized and co-produced 'Screening Surveillance' – three short near-future fiction films that call attention to the potential human consequences of big data surveillance. sava completed her PhD on Academic Twitter at New York University.

Other works:

Screening Surveillance

Anger in Academic Twitter: Sharing, Caring, and Getting Mad Online

Attribution

4.

A CRITICAL TAKE ON OER PRACTICES: INTERROGATING COMMERCIALIZATION, COLONIALISM, AND CONTENT

Sarah Hare

Originally published on October 21, 2015

Photo by Flickr user arbyreed (CC BY NC 2.0)

Introduction

This spring, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) held their 2015 biennial conference in Portland. While I attended multiple sessions and poster presentations on Open Access (OA) and Open

Educational Resources (OER), Heather Joseph's invited paper session, "Open Expansion: Connecting the Open Access, Open Data and OER Dots," left the most lasting impression on me. Joseph's presentation focused on the different embodiments of openness and how collaboration between the efforts could be transformative. While explaining the Open Data front, Joseph's presentation stopped on a photo of an oil rig. A few slides later, she summarized politicians' take on open data, explaining that while President Obama had called data a "valuable national commodity," Dutch politician Neelie Kroes had gone a step further and named data "the new oil for the digital age" (Joseph, 2015; Kroes, 2012). Joseph (2015) went on to explain that Kroes' assertion was that "national economies and national destinies [were] going to rise and fall on understanding how to get the most value from data."

Right before I listened to Kroes' words, which seemed so profoundly nationalistic and exploitative to me in that moment, I saw the photo of the rig and thought about western conquest and our pursuit of other nations' natural resources. This sparked a deep realization within me. I found that all of the discussions I had engaged in about openness—including Joseph's presentation—were about shared goals or shared politics. The shared risks were often left unaddressed. I started to consider how openness, when disconnected from its political underpinnings, could become as exploitative as the traditional system it had replaced. I began to reflect on the ways in which I had used, or experienced others' use of, openness as a solution for poverty or development—often in a way that was disconnected from an understanding of systemic inequality.

This article, which is an intentional critique of OER praxis, has given me the space to explore these questions. OER are digital learning objects that are shared under "an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others." Under this definition, learning objects can mean almost anything used as educational material, including tutorials, videos, guides, lesson plans, and syllabi. The Open Education movement is different than the OA movement, which is focused on the free and unrestricted use of research materials and literature. However, like Open Education, OA works to enable deeper unrestricted analysis so that scholars can read articles but also "crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose" (Chan, et. al, 2015, para 3).

This article uses a critique of OER creation and practice as a proxy for the open movement in LIS generally. Thus, it utilizes some of the useful critiques OA has engendered to inform the discussion of OER, which is less developed. While the intention is not to conflate OA or critiques of OA with OER, it is worth noting that both evoke a similar rhetoric of openness and, as such, share similarities that enable us to apply lessons learned in one domain into the other.

The first section will explore critiques of OER and openness in relation to commercialization, colonialism, and content. While not exhaustive, these critiques address issues of labor, the corporatization of higher education, oppressive learning formats, imperialism, and technocratic discourse around development and the information poor. This broad overview will provide a useful framework for understanding how openness generally—and Open Education specifically—can be improved.

I will then offer tangible suggestions for how librarians and other LIS professionals can construct more thoughtful OER practices. These include thinking critically about the language we use when engaging

stakeholders; moving beyond cost and marketing for our institutions and focusing on open pedagogy and student-centered learning; using OER creation as an opportunity to talk to students about labor and knowledge production; and challenging whose knowledge matters globally. These are not meant to be "solutions" but instead starting points. I do not provide a suggestion for every critique but instead advocate for the use of open, critical pedagogy as a method for engaging with several of the critiques mentioned, as it can make our practices more deliberate and authentically engage students in issues of openness.

I believe that OER have value. I believe that equitable access to research and the data that accompanies that research is imperative and a goal our profession should continue working toward. But I also believe that it is worth our time to be intentional, to be cognizant of our position within increasingly corporatized institutions and consider how we might be furthering the goals of those institutions, to think seriously about how we can be actively dismantling power structures instead of perpetuating them, and to remind ourselves why we think open is worth fighting for in the first place. In explaining the difference between critique and criticism, author and screenwriter Balogun Ojetade (2012) writes, "Critique is not in service of a single 'truth'…Critique opens questioning and makes single-truths unstable so as to be more inclusive of difference" (para 5). Our professional conversation around openness risks being in service of a single truth. My hope is that nuanced critique can help us move these conversations forward in a thoughtful way.

Critiques of OER & Openness

Labor & the Commercialization of Higher Education

Academic labor is currently structured around tenure. In other words, tenure-track faculty members do not have to rely solely on dividends from their research output because their institution compensates them for doing research. However, as higher education increasingly relies on adjunct labor, this model is compromised. In order to offer more classes for less money, adjuncts are compensated by the number of courses they teach instead of their research output. As money is taken away from educators, how is the relationship between openness and labor changed (Drabinski, et. al, 2015)? Or, in more pointed terms, how does openness exasperate labor issues? Do institutions expect adjuncts to continue to create the same level of output a faculty member would, including OER creation?

One of the major critiques OA has received is that it can make labor become more invisible (Roh, Drabinski, & Inefuku, 2015). The invisibility of the labor required to do the actual work behind making a publication OA is often "distant" from the rhetoric behind why OA is important, creating a disconnect between values and practice (Drabinski, et. al, 2015). Further, less "academic" work that is fundamental to maintaining OA publications (metadata creation, for example) becomes devalued (Roh, Drabinski, & Inefuku, 2015). Matthew Cheney (2015) argues that we do open systems, including OER, a great disservice if we do not talk about the labor and technology structures needed to make them possible.

Thus, there are two important labor issues related to OER creation. The first is that OER creation is not

rewarded in the current tenure system. Faculty members are often granted tenure because of their research impact, which might relate to OA but not OER. Further, beyond compensation, tenure provides (or has historically provided) some level of protection to take professional risks. As the concept of tenure becomes compromised and the number of positions having tenure-level protection decreases in the United States, the incentive for faculty to devote time to exploring OER creation is also compromised. The second is that adjuncts might be expected to create learning objects and even deposit them as OER but the current system does not reward them monetarily for the extra labor involved in doing so. If both parties continue to create OER, their labor might become unrecognized and devalued.

The way in which this academic labor is applied at an institutional level is also worth discussing. OA advocates have started to realize that OA, separated from its political underpinnings, can quickly become a governmental and commercial source of revenue (Lawson, 2015; Watters, 2014). In the case of OER creation specifically, openness can also become a source of branding and marketing for universities (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008). Librarians should continually question who benefits from supporting openness. We should then recognize that any open movement that happens within a neoliberal institution might further politics or initiatives that do not align with our values.

Roxanne Shirazi (2015) recently wrote about librarians' relationships with their employers, particularly as boosters of their university's brand. While her post is focused on scholarly communication, labor, and copyright more broadly, Shirazi asserts that institutions are often more than willing to promote prestigious or interesting projects but "when it comes to financially and structurally supporting the sustained work of the individuals behind them" it is a different story (para 4). This applies to OER creation and application. Institutions might be willing to publicize lower costs for their students but what steps are they taking to rectify the labor issues described above for adjuncts?

OER projects also obviously require labor beyond the creation of the actual learning object. OER repositories have to be maintained and updated. OER have to be organized and assigned metadata for discovery to be effective. We must also continue to think about how this labor is funded. One funding model is a for-profit company to pursue this work. One example is Lumen, which has worked closely with several colleges and universities to implement OER.

Another funding model is for a repository or institution to find donor support. MIT is a leader in OER creation and the pioneer of OpenCourseWare (OCW) production. d'Oliveira and Lerman found that MIT received $1,836,000 in philanthropic funding and donations to support the OCW initiative in 2009 alone, which covered about 51 percent of that year's annual operating costs (as cited in Winn, 2012, p. 142). We should consider what it means for donors to underwrite the sustainability of our institutions' projects (Winn, 2012) and how making more sustainable change might be compromised by this funding model (Kanwar, Kodhandaraman, and Umar, 2010).

In short, we must recognize that the changing labor system and the continued commercialization of higher education are not disconnected from our work with OER. Joss Winn (2012) challenges open advocates to apply the Marxist view of social wealth to openness, stressing that being open does not offer an alternative

to "the capitalist form of social domination" (p. 134). He contends that OER, under capitalism, ensure that "employees are as productive as possible within the limits of time and space" by creating an object that can defy these constraints to create continuous institutional value and promotion (p. 141). We must think critically about whether our open work is doing the social justice, political work we envision it doing. If we fail to ask these questions, we risk endorsing programs that align more with profit than with access.

Colonialism & Imperialistic Practices

In "Beyond the 'Information Rich and Poor': Future Understandings of Inequality in Globalising Informational Economies," Ingrid Burkett (2000) identifies five assumptions that have been historically made about the role of information in international development:

1. Give the poor a computer and they will move from being information poor to information rich.
2. Information inequality is a North/South issue.
3. Access to more information enriches people's lives.
4. The 'information society' will be more democratic and participatory.
5. Given enough information we can solve all the world's problems. (p. 680)

Burkett (2000) asserts that these five assumptions egregiously simplify both economic and social global inequality. Every librarian should consider how any of these myths might be embodied in their current language around the need for openness. For example, in trying to explain why OA is important to stakeholders, I have sometimes defaulted to talking about the need to share information with developing nations. Yet, understanding inequality through the lens of these narrow "truths" should give us pause.

A dichotomy of superior/inferior ways of knowing has been established within these discourses and the assumptions that were made to employ this rhetoric. The first assumption is that the Global South will remain ignorant and underdeveloped until it has access to the West's knowledge, which is an idea that is historically grounded in presidential conceptions of development (Haider & Bawden, 2006). The second assumption is that the West should focus on the spread of its information instead of facilitating a true knowledge *exchange,* which illustrates what type of information is valued. Burkett (2000) finds that even asserting that some are "information poor" overlooks the types of information that might be important to a specific community. She states, "people may be 'poor' in terms of the information they can retrieve from the Internet but be rich in ways which could never be calculated in the Western scientific paradigm—in terms of sustainability, social relationships, community and cultural traditions" (p. 690).

The assumption that is most relevant to the discussion of OER here is that access to more information—which is different than access to knowledge (Burkett, 2000)—will alter exploitative colonialist histories and deeply rooted structural oppression. We see these assumptions being made in conversations surrounding the digital divide (Watters, 2015) and in the implementation of programs like One Laptop Per

Child[1] where access to technology—often technology that is not sustainable or integrated into the lives of the people supposed to be using it in a meaningful way (Burkett, 2000)—is seen as a viable opportunity for development and progress, often in a manner that is blind to an understanding of structural issues. Unfortunately, some research has found that these beliefs are well represented in LIS literature. In 2006, Haider and Bawden conducted an interpretive analysis of 35 English articles published between 1995 and 2005 in Library and Information Science journals, found by searching "information poverty OR poor." They find that the "'information poor' are positioned as the legitimate target of professional practice" in LIS (p. 373). Many of the close readings they did identified language that connected a country or region's educational inequality with a lack of professional librarians in that area, creating rhetoric that ignores the complexities of why inequality exists and positioning the librarian as savior (Haider & Bawden, 2006).

OER has also been connected to development and is often cited in conversations about global rights, specifically the right to education.[2] Western universities sometimes use the need for global access to educational materials as an explanation for their commitment to OER creation.[3] These explanations, while possibly well meaning, are destructive. They overestimate what OER can reasonably accomplish and use OER as a legitimate "solution" for larger inequalities. OER are only one piece of the solution and are not a substitute for an adequately funded and staffed education system (Bates, 2015).

When we consider who leads the Open Education movement, it is clear that these assumptions are in some ways also actively practiced within the movement. Right now, many OER aggregators function as somewhere to "dump" content or lessons already created in the hope that someone somewhere will be able to use it (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008). This is a problem because context is what makes an OER transferrable (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008). It is also a problem because "content creation (including educational content) on the Web is currently heavily dominated by the developed and English-speaking world" (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008, para 9). For example, Wiki Educator's "Exemplary Collection of Open eLearning Content Repositories," which has been cited as an important list of repositories (Atenas, 2012; Watters, 2012), is composed of primarily American and European-based repositories. Javiera Atenas' list, which includes data from OER Research Hub, contains more global OER initiatives; still, over half of the repositories listed are Western. The creation of OER by Western institutions is not in itself a bad thing. However, it becomes troubling when these institutions promise that their OER will be useful or applicable to all learners globally for educational purposes. It is also disconcerting when access to content is touted as the educational solution when in reality affordable, sustainable "access to programs leading to credentials" is the real barrier (Bates, 2011, para 27).

Kim Christen (2012), an anthropologist at Washington State University, researches openness—specifically the openness of cultural heritage objects—and its connection to colonialism. She asserts that the "collecting history of Western nations is comfortably forgotten in the celebration of freedom and openness" (p. 2876). Her work rejects the argument that "information wants to be free" and instead asserts that information wants to be contextualized (Christen, 2012). She has done important work to provide that context to cultural heritage objects by creating licenses and a CMS that give power and autonomy back to indigenous communities. By

using these tools, the community is able to decide if objects should be open, closed to the community, or open to a specific community or during a particular time based on the historical sharing of objects by season, status, or gender.

I believe that her assertions create a valuable framework for understanding OER advocacy. A learning object with relevant context, an application that is not culture-specific, and the capacity to be truly localized and understood is more important than a learning object that is simply free. In addition, while moving beyond a North-South information flow and developing a mechanism for reciprocal sharing is the goal, librarians should be cognizant of what risks other nations face in sharing their educational materials. We might find that having a conversation about these risks and contexts is more important than complete openness.

Content, Format, & Audience

In addition to how OER are used and discussed, the form of the OER itself has been critiqued. Open Educational Resources (OER) can sometimes be used synonymously with textbooks or traditional learning objects like worksheets and lesson plans. However, OER, when defined broadly, can also include wikis, LibGuides, tutorials, syllabi, apps, and websites. This divide between what OER usually refer to and what it *can* include illustrates an important underlying assumption made about OER. We often think that OER are created in the academy for the academy. Because OER are often presented as a response to the price of educational resources increasing exponentially, their potential use is sometimes stunted. OER can also be used outside of traditional academic settings for self-learning purposes.

How, then, do OER continue to reproduce the academy, even if they are used for other purposes, both in format and in content? Many scholars have critiqued textbooks as a stagnant, oppressive format. Shaffer (2014) defines the traditional textbook as a "physically and legally fixed expression of ideas from a scholar outside [the class] learning community" (para 3). Wiggins & McTighe (2005), the authors of *Understanding by Design*, state that textbooks "can easily hide from students (and teachers) the true nature of the subject and the world of scholarship. Like an encyclopedia, few textbooks help students understand the inquiries, arguments, and judgments behind the summaries" (p. 230). Drabinski, et al. (2015) find textbooks "historically contingent" and the reproduction of them unrevolutionary. Why, then, are open textbooks often used as an example (if not *the* example) of OER? Why are there such extensive efforts to create more open textbooks?[4] Further, how do textbooks, as the primary form of OER shared, limit self-learners outside of the academy? For example, when the goal is to present historically linear "truths" about a subject, more iterative and active forms of self-learning might be hindered.

This applies to content as well as format. If self-learners or even other instructors are going to use content meaningfully, OER have to move past the content "dump" (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008) toward context and an understanding of how and why the OER was made. Audrey Watters (2015) contends that ed-tech is coded with "[p]rivileges, ideologies, expectations, [and] values" (para 46). The same is true of OER. When learning objects are stripped of their environment, learning from them becomes more challenging (Bates,

2011). Localization—going beyond simply translating an object and instead truly situating it in culture, values, and educational need (Pullin, Hassin, & Mora, 2007)—is vital, particularly as a large amount of Western OER continue to be created. Librarians can start by teaching others the importance of metadata and documentation in order to make OER more localizable.

Suggestions for OER Praxis

The following section builds upon the previous critiques of openness to provide starting points for more thoughtful, intentional OER practices within librarianship.

Use Realistic Language

After Haider (2007) performed a close reading of international OA documents, including mission statements and declarations like the Budapest Open Access Initiative, she found that OA was discussed alongside concepts "such as humanity, poverty, cultural heritage, or equity, which are all highly charged notions entangled with strong connotations and related to various agendas" (p. 454). Like OA, Open Education can sometimes be discussed in highly-charged terms. It is also often presented as a solution, not only for the rising costs of textbooks and other learning materials, but also for fixing education globally (see footnote ii). First and foremost, librarians need to be honest with stakeholders about what OER can accomplish. While sharing educational materials with other nations can foster learning, it is not that simple. OER should not be presented as *the* answer to structural inequality or used to disregard or replace serious funding issues in other nations' higher education systems.

Librarians can situate OER within historical, economic, and cultural practices that make their capacity more clear. In other words, when we talk to stakeholders we can complicate access instead of simplifying it. We should continually stress that OERs are "important in helping to widen access to learning opportunities, but ultimately...are enhancements rather than a replacement for a well-funded public education system, which remains the core foundation for enabling equal access to educational opportunities" (Bates, 2015, key takeaway 6).

Interrogate Whose Knowledge Matters Globally

When talking to stakeholders, librarians might also move beyond the rhetoric of access to discuss reciprocal sharing. Even if it is free for "developing" nations to read papers (or access OER), it may still be too expensive for some scholars to publish these objects, further limiting the amount of reciprocal sharing happening and making research from other nations less visible (Bonaccorso, et al., 2014; Czerniewicz, 2013). Librarians can use language that problematizes access as a value, making the idea of true "access" more complex than simply giving other nations the ability to view Western content.

Move Past Dumping Toward Possible Localization (Or, Do Outreach Beyond the Learning Object)

Librarians should assert that the paywall is just one obstacle of many that learners in other nations face when utilizing an OER. Technology, language, and applicability are also important factors. What does it take for an OER to not just be translated but truly localized, truly applicable to others' educational needs and prior understanding?

We can start by focusing on teaching instructors and OER creators how to design OER that are "easily adaptable to local needs" and can be easily translated, situated, and expanded upon (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008). Thus, our outreach to faculty about OER creation is shortsighted if it only discusses the actual learning object. We should be proactive about teaching faculty how to create documentation and supply metadata that gives meaning to their OER and makes it more discoverable. We should also teach instructors about technical standards and technological infrastructure required for accessing OER, especially videos and other objects that require a high bandwidth to view, and how this might exclude specific audiences (Pullin, Hassin, & Mora, 2007).

Move Beyond Cost

Librarians must acknowledge that while their institutions might be concerned with global education at some level, the marketization of OER might play a role in how OER work is funded, sustained, and prioritized. Quite simply, OER and OCW create "potentially beneficial marketing opportunities for universities and, by extension, a potential supply of future fee-paying students" (Huijser, Bedford, & Bull, 2008). This is not just a distraction but also a conflict of interest.

The price of textbooks has increased 812 percent between 1978 and 2012 (Moxley, 2013) and this phenomenon affects students' ability to engage in class in very real ways. Increasing access to educational materials, especially to students of lower socioeconomic status, is important work. Still, David Wiley (2013) has found that there are "much bigger victories to be won with openness" than cost (para 1). This is because we, as educators, can utilize OER in ways that are more meaningful than just making content free.

Robin DeRosa (2015) argues that there are a lot of ways that institutions could potentially save students money, including changing class sizes and closing facilities. She calls educators to advocate for OER use not because of "the health of the institution" but instead for "the empowerment of the learner" (DeRosa, 2015). When librarians advocate for OER creation and use, they should go beyond using rhetoric about cost or access and also explain how OER can be used to improve pedagogy. Librarians should also continually consider their role in furthering the goals of their institution and if they could have a role in shaping their institution's future goals.

Use Open Pedagogy

Giroux (2002) writes that higher education cannot be viewed "merely as [a site] of commercial investment" because it is a public good where students gain a public voice and come to terms with their own power and agency (p. 432). The previous section challenged librarians to think beyond OER's value in saving students' money and instead apply OER to student learning. There are at least two ways that this can happen. The first is by incorporating the tenets of open pedagogy into library instruction sessions. The second is by using student OER creation as a springboard for important conversations about knowledge production. Librarians can also be active in helping other instructors, including faculty, learn how to do this in their classroom.

David Wiley (2015) has claimed that there is "nothing about OER adoption that forces innovative teaching practices on educators" (para 13). OER use becomes more meaningful in the classroom when it is combined with critical pedagogy, which fosters student agency and nurtures reflection and growth (Stommel, 2014). Robin DeRosa (2015) defines open pedagogy as instruction that:

- Prioritizes community and collaboration instead of content
- Connects the academy with the wider public
- Is skeptical of end-points, final products, gatekeeping, and experts

Librarians can start by working toward instructional practices that embody these values. But it is naïve not to recognize that librarians face obstacles in doing so, particularly in having autonomy and power over what their instruction sessions will cover because of faculty members' limited understanding of our work (Accardi, 2015; Wallis, 2015). Thus, if faculty on campus are not integrating open pedagogy into their classroom, it can be difficult for librarians to do so as well.

I would challenge us to think about our impact more broadly. While we might not have control over whether a class' final research assignment is open or collaborative, we can start these conversations on campus. If we do outreach about openness or OER, it should cover the mechanics (like repositories and licensing) *as well as* how OER might be integrated into the classroom through open pedagogy. Librarians that do instruction can also use these tenets in their sessions or for-credit classes. We can spark interest by presenting research as a continuous community endeavor for students. If there is an opportunity to teach a for-credit course, we should explore how students might become producers of OER and other open content.

As an example, my institution is currently discussing how faculty might move away from assigning the traditional research paper and instead craft research assignments that empower students to create. Any consultation my team has with instructors about their research assignments should not only discuss the potential use of OER but also OER creation as an option for giving students agency over their learning. These conversations should continue to define OER broadly to include public-facing, hackable, iterative learning objects like wikis and blogs, instead of focusing solely on just textbooks.

Teach Critical Openness & Labor

As students engage with OER, how can librarians help them understand knowledge production, intellectual property, and the privacy issues inherent in their project? Further, how can librarians leverage students' experience creating OER as an opportunity to teach issues of labor as a response to the corporatization of higher education?

As students develop understanding in an area and are asked to create an open research project, they should also develop an understanding of how complex information creation is. The goal is for them to grasp that information is a social, public process instead of a final product (Lawson, Sanders, and Smith, 2015). First and foremost, students should be asked to reflect on this process. Librarians should advocate for continued reflection so that students can meaningfully consider the challenges inherent in creating instead of merely focusing on what was created.

One of the most important conversations librarians might have about knowledge production is about unseen labor. This conversation about labor can spark larger conversations about funding cuts, the adjunctification of higher education, and faculty reward systems. Cheney (2015) [recommends](#) being transparent with students about how funding in the higher education system works so that OER can be created. He proposes that instructors explain how tuition dollars fund faculty salaries, which support faculty research and instructional activities (Cheney, 2015). These funds, in addition to endowments or donations, enable faculty to create OER at no charge because they do not depend on revenue from OER for income. I would propose that we also push students by asking, "but what if the tenure track model is eliminated and faculty are suddenly supported by a wage that directly corresponds only with the number of classes they teach?" As students consider how much time it takes to complete their project and create an OER, librarians can facilitate these conversations.

As a disclaimer, while asking students to create OER in order to explore these issues firsthand is a great first step, this practice can become coercive or uncomfortable for students. If we ask them to create OER we cannot do so in order to take advantage of free labor to create more useful learning objects. We must also remember that some open practices might be based on behaviors that students are not comfortable with (Weller, 2014), including publishing their work in open, online venues. David Wiley (2013) proposes that educators build a place of trust with students when adopting open pedagogy. This happens by being transparent about why each activity is useful for learning and giving tangible examples of what a successful open project might look like (Wiley, 2013). This might also include asking students to think critically about whether or not they would like their project to be open, instead of requiring it to be. The conversation around why they might consider openness is much more valuable than simply making it a requirement.

Conclusion

To borrow [language](#) from Audrey Watters (2015), I believe that OER do not "magically flatten hierarchies"

(slide 9). They are produced, used, and shaped by important historical and cultural contexts. Free and unrestricted access to OER is just *one step* in improving education, not the primary solution.

Librarians are apt to do the integral work of reframing and complicating the OER movement. Our extensive understanding of copyright, instructional design, and discovery, combined with our interest in social justice, makes us natural leaders for helping others understand why Open Education matters. However, entertaining uncritical conceptions of development, the "information poor," and the marketization of OER actually compromises our ability to do the work that we claim to value. The politics of our campuses or leadership can (and do) limit how loudly our voices carry within our institutions (Accardi, 2015; Wallis, 2015). Still, our critical perspective is needed now more than ever.

Acknowledgements

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1. While Burkett alludes to how technology can exasperate inequalities (p. 684), there are more tangible examples of how this discourse is specifically used with One Laptop per Child. In 2012, Audrey Watters summarized the failures of OLPC initiative. Within her summary, she maintains that Nicholas Negropont, the head of foundation, truly believes that "children can learn (and teach each other) on their own. Children are naturally inquisitive; they are ingenious. Access to an Internet-enabled computing device is sufficient" (para 13). Another example is a Guardian article from 2005 were Negropont states "Poverty can only be eliminated through education" (para 6). This rhetoric, combined with inadequate teacher training and the failure of the program, illustrates how dropping technology into a community, without context or purpose, is not meaningful.

2. The twenty-sixth article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to education" and that education "shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations" (article 26). These ideas are often cited and developed in conversations around OER. One example is the Cape Town Open Education Declaration, which states, "[OER] constitute a wise investment in teaching and learning for the 21st century… They will help teachers excel in their work and provide new opportunities for visibility and global impact. They will accelerate innovation in teaching. They will give more control over learning to the learners themselves. These are strategies that make sense for everyone" (para 10) and "we have an opportunity to dramatically improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world through freely available, high-quality, locally relevant educational and learning opportunities" (para 11). Another document that employs this language is the 2012 Paris OER Declaration, which was created by UNESCO. It is important to note that the language that situates OER as a solution stems from rhetoric used about education as a solution more generally. One example includes remarks from US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan: "[e]ducation is still the key to eliminating gender inequities, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity…Closing the achievement gap and closing the opportunity gap is the civil rights issue of our generation" (as cited in Watters, 2015, para 2).

3. This language is usually present on the institution's repository or webpage. Examples include MIT's OCW site, which states "educators improve courses and curricula, making their schools more effective; students find additional resources to help them succeed; and independent learners enrich their lives and use the content to tackle some of our world's most difficult challenges, including sustainable development, climate change, and cancer eradication" (para 2) and Open Michigan's site, which notes that the initiative will "dramatically [expand] the University's global impact and influence and strengthening it as a point of reference for learning and teaching materials for educators and learners worldwide" (para 2).

4. Some current examples include the University of Minnesota's Open Textbook Library, Kansas State University's Open/

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Alternative Textbook Initiative, and Portland State University's Open Access Textbook Initiative. These are not necessarily examples of linear or oppressive learning objects but instead examples of how we continue to replicate textbooks in an open environment.

5.

DECOLONISING THE COLLECTION, ANALYSES AND USE OF STUDENT DATA: A TENTATIVE EXPLORATION/PROPOSAL

Paul Prinsloo

Originally published on November 14, 2016

Image credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xhosa_Wars#/media/File:Cape_Colony00.jpg

Voices from the Global South* (*I know the term is contentious) increasingly demand to not only be recognised in the extremely uneven and skewed terrain of knowledge production and dissemination, but

to actively take part and contest and reshape knowledge claims. I would like to use this blog to tentatively interrogate the potential of a decolonising lens on the collection, analyses and use of student data.

Disclaimer 1: I am intensely aware of the impact of my race and gender in thinking about student data through a decolonising lens. My race, gender and the fact that I write this blog in English should make me uncomfortable and I am. Whether my inherent complicity in notions of white superiority precludes me in taking part in the debate is for you, as reader, to decide. I constantly grapple with the intersectionalities of my gender, race and settler identity as an African. In the field of learning analytics, as the measurement, collection, analysis and use of student data, this blog is a fundamentally and intentionally incomplete attempt to map a decolonising lens on learning analytics.

Disclaimer 2: I acknowledge that notions of post colonialism, decoloniality and coloniality are subjects of serious intellectual pursuits and my grasp of the different overlaps and differences/nuances is, for now, basic. I do accept, however, that coloniality is a reality and that we need to "better understand the nexus of knowledge, power, and being that sustain an endless war on specific bodies, cultures, knowledges, nature and peoples" (Maldonado-Torres, Outline of ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality, 26 October, 2016).

Disclaimer 3: I have a suspicion that the collection, analysis and use of student data overlaps with other discourses and practices of surveillance and digital redlining. As such a decolonising lens on learning analytics overlaps with and needs to take into account these discourses.

A month ago at the annual conference of the *South African Association for Institutional Research* (SAAIR) researchers from the Southern African region reflected on the role of institutional research in the extremely volatile South African higher education context with its increasing student demands for free higher education (#FeesMustFall) and demands to decolonise curricula. In my presentation I asked "How is it possible that the #FeesMustFall #RhodesMustFall campaigns caught higher education institutions relatively (or totally?) unprepared *despite everything that we already know about our students*?" (emphasis added); "Is it possible that the writing was on the wall but that we, for whatever reason, decided to ignore the message? Or did not understand the message?" and "What did we not know that would have prepared us for the disruption and destruction we faced over the last 18 months?"

Excursus: A lot of my research focused and still focuses on the ethical and privacy implications in learning analytics and in my preparation for this conference it started to deem on me how our collection, analysis and use of student data are informed by particular ideological and political agendas. This was the beginning of my discomfort and reflection.

I had (and still have) the nagging thought that the our samples, variables and the tools we use to collect, analyse and use student data in higher education are shaped by the liberal and neoliberal social imaginaries of higher education, of the 'educated subject.' If we accept that data collection, analysis and use are *political* acts and serve declared and hidden assumptions about the purpose of higher education and the masters it serves, what are the implications for learning analytics? In a follow-up discussion during that conference I became aware of my increasing discomfort with our uncritical if not blasé approach to the collection, analysis and use of student data – without ever questioning the social imaginary informing our choice of variables, the hidden

assumptions informing the proxies we use to define 'effective' teaching and learning, our emphasis on what our students lack and *their* deficiencies that prevent them from fitting in and our seeming nonchalant responses to the collateral damage of our analytics and interventions. During the conference I raised the question: "What does a *decolonised* and *decolonising* collection, analysis and use of student data look like?" Following the question there were a few awkward laughs, one or two responses that implied that I may have lost my senses or don't I know that data are raw and the collection of data is neutral…

I could not sleep that night as I wrestled with the thought of what a decolonised and decolonising approach to the collection, analysis and use would look like? Already in the said presentation did I think aloud on how our collection and use of student data seem to disregard the entrenched, inter-generational structural inequalities in South African society. We collect student data as if students start their studies with a clean slate, a tabula rasa, and as if they have not been impacted upon by generations of discrimination and disenfranchisement. We seem to blatantly disregard the fact that most of our students have limited loci of control over where they study, where and how long they can access the Internet, how many prescribed books they can buy. We ignore the epistemic violence integral to much of our curricula. We somehow believe that (more) grit and a growth mind set are the answer to their pathogenic vulnerability. And when you add to this the belief by government that education, on its own can rectify generations of injustice and inequality, then higher education institutions select and collect data that provide us with information on how to move students quicker through the system to increase our return-on-investment.

As my thoughts on what a decolonised/decolonising approach to the collection, analysis and use of student data were taking shape, I was forced to reflect on the question "how does a South African perspective differ from other perspectives in the world? What difference does a postcolonial and post-apartheid context make in how we view the ethical implications of the collection, analysis and use of student data?"

In the South African context we've been down the road before during Apartheid where individuals were classified according to some arbitrary classifications of race – white, black, coloured, and Indian. Four categories. Categories based on the curliness of your hair. The shape of your nose. The colour of your skin. There were also many people that somehow did not fit clearly into one category but who were categorised regardless of their 'ill-fit'.

These classifications had immense consequences for many generations since.

Your category determined where you were allowed to live. What schools you had access to. The age at which you were allowed to start school. The curricula prescribed for the schools. The universities you had access to. The job opportunities. The loans and insurance you had access to. Your risk profile for defaulting on loans, for getting HIV, for being in possession of drugs, for having friends and family who are in jail.

All based on you fitting into an arbitrary category. Categories that were informed by white superiority. Categories that were needed to ensure that we protect racial purity (WTF). Categories that ensured that education for white kids received much more funding, had access to better resources and better curricula and better job opportunities and better loan schemes and better universities and better lives. And I was part of this. I was white.

The effects of these classifications have been felt and will be felt for many generations to come. Many of the assumptions and effects of these classifications became institutionalised and formed the basis for a massive set of laws and regulations. While many of these laws and institutionalised forms of racism and discrimination have been changed, *it will take generations to address the effects of these structural inequalities and injustices*. And yet we continue to use students' home addresses and school experiences as variables if not determinants for access to higher education? We still charge a one-size-fits-all registration fee? We use variables such as number of logins, and contributions to discussion forums where the language of tuition is a settler language as variables to predict their success. WTF.

In the broader discourses on the collection, analysis and use of data – those who are on the receiving end of discriminatory practices and bias are often unheard, redlined and often excluded from access to the criteria being used to make decisions. The sources used to collect the data, the biases and assumptions of those who collected and analysed the data, the algorithms and decisions made in the analyses of the data – all of these disappear into a 'black box' – inaccessible, and not accountable to anyone, not even the user of the analysis at a particular moment in time.

So a contextualised view on the ethical implications on the collection, analysis and use of student data has to account for addressing the structural inequalities of the past, and ensuring that issues of race, gender, home addresses, credit records, criminal records, school completion marks are not used to predict potential and/or to exclude individuals from reaching their potential.

A decolonising lens on the collection, analysis and use of student data cannot ignore how colonialism

- Stole the dignity and lives of millions based on arbitrary criteria and beliefs about meritocracy supported by asymmetries of power
- Extracted value in exchange for bare survival
- Objectified humans as mere data points and information in the global, colonial imaginary
- Controlled the movement of millions based on arbitrary criteria such as race, cultural grouping and risk of subversion?

How dare we collect data like schooling backgrounds, and home addresses, and parental income as if there is not history to these data?

How do we collect, analyse and use student data recognising that their data are not indicators of their potential, merit or even necessarily engagement but the results of the inter-generational impact of the skewed allocation of value and resources based on race, gender and culture?

A decolonising lens on the collection, analysis and use of student data therefore has to

- Acknowledge the lasting, inter-generational effects of colonialism and apartheid
- Collect, analyse and use student data with the aim of addressing these effects and historical and arising tensions between ensuring quality, sustainability and success

- Critically engage with the assumptions surrounding data, identity, proxies, consequences and accountability
- Respond to institutional character, context and vision
- Consider the ethical implications of the purpose, the processes, the tools, the staff involved, the governance and the results of the collection, analysis and use of student data

(In)conclusions

I acknowledged that this blog is a fundamentally and intentionally incomplete attempt to map a decolonising lens on learning analytics. I acknowledged my complicity and my own discomfort in attempting to take part in this discourse. How our the purpose of our collection, analysis and use of student data, our tools, our samples, our variables still informed by a colonial social imaginary of control and 'the educated subject'?

I hope this blog starts a conversation.

I close with a [poem](#) by Abhay Xaxa –

I am not your data, nor am I your vote bank,
I am not your project, or any exotic museum object,
I am not the soul waiting to be harvested,
Nor am I the lab where your theories are tested,
I am not your cannon fodder, or the invisible worker,
or your entertainment at India habitat centre,
I am not your field, your crowd, your history,
your help, your guilt, medallions of your victory,
I refuse, reject, resist your labels,
your judgments, documents, definitions,
your models, leaders and patrons,
because they deny me my existence, my vision, my space,
your words, maps, figures, indicators,
they all create illusions and put you on pedestal,
from where you look down upon me,
So I draw my own picture, and invent my own grammar,
I make my own tools to fight my own battle,
For me, my people, my world, and my Adivasi self!

About the Author

Paul Prinsloo is a Research Professor in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in the Department of Business Management, in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, University of South Africa (Unisa). Since 2015, he is also a Visiting Professor at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany. Paul is an internationally recognised speaker, scholar and researcher and has published numerous articles in the fields of teaching and learning, student success in distance education contexts, learning analytics, and curriculum development. His current research focuses on the collection, analysis and use of student data in learning analytics, graduate supervision and digital identity. He blogs at https://opendistanceteachingandlearning.wordpress.com/ and his Twitter alias is @14prinsp

Other works:

Prinsloo, P. (2020). Of 'black boxes' and algorithmic decision-making in (higher) education – A commentary. Big Data & Society. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720933994

Prinsloo, P. (2019). A social cartography of student data as performative politics. British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET), 50(6), 2810-2823. doi:10.1111/bjet.12872

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6.

REFLECTIONS ON GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT: BARRIERS TO WORKING IN THE OPEN

Samantha Streamer Veneruso

Originally published on March 17, 2017

So in December I used [Bronwyn Hegarty's Attributes of Open Pedagogy](#), along with several other documents to develop a [page to use](#) in conversation with faculty about open pedagogy. Last week, I had the opportunity to share it with a small group, and it worked really well in terms of focusing the discussion and talking about open pedagogy to interested, but unsure faculty. I will use it again for an upcoming discussion as part of a faculty series on teaching in a digital age. This series has been wonderful; the faculty engaged and participatory, and the ideas that have flowed have been really interesting.

photo by samantha veneruso

On Wednesday as part of a brief #openlearning17 exchange about open pedagogy. I tweeted a comment that colleagues of mine had made about my open teaching methods as "fun" but not rigorous. I have heard the comment in various forms, but the main jist is "I know you do all those **FUN** things, but there is no time in **MY** course if I want to cover all the content." I threw the comment out trying to make the point that open

pedagogical practices require a new paradigm of what learning looks like, and what teaching looks like. Gardner Campbell replied that it is hard to keep a generous spirit around critiques like that:

> .@professorsv @sgreenla @StephJBlackmon Hard to keep a generous spirit around "critiques" like that #openlearning17
>> — Gardner Campbell (@GardnerCampbell) March 15, 2017

That led me to today's reflection. Gardner's words are exactly it. Open pedagogy does require a generous spirit on a lot of levels: generous in the sense of being open and sharing with others; generous in terms of trusting others; generous in terms of our beliefs about students; generous with ourselves and our own faults and failures.
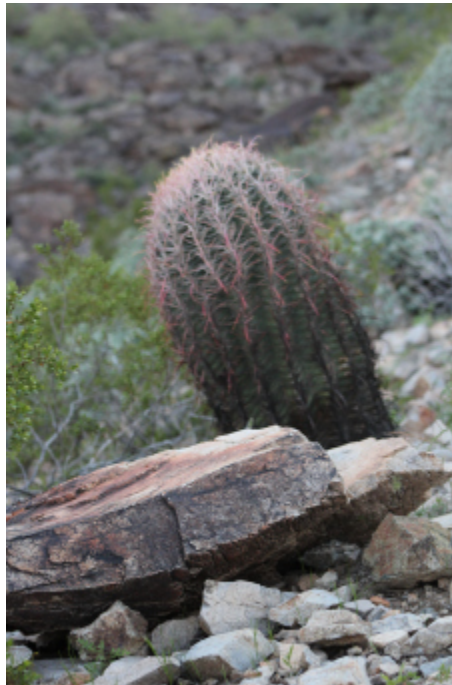
photo by samantha veneruso

So what are the barriers to a generous spirit? What are the barriers to open pedagogy beyond lack of open content? I think we can talk about open pedagogy and evangelize about, but if we don't acknowledge the barriers and talk about the underlying systems and beliefs which fuel those barriers, we can't shift the larger conversation. As part of a @VConnecting session at #oeglobal, a question was raised as to whether the open ed community was really small, just under communicated or just had trouble institutionalizing. Without understanding the barriers to the generous spirit that we need to nurture to support open education. open pedagogy and practices, we will not be able to move it forward.

So some of the barriers I see are:

Perceptions of teaching and learning

Open practices challenge conceptions of what quality teaching and learning looks like. It doesn't match all the models of systematic education that we have experienced. Open is perceived fun for students because they are engaged, but not real teaching, not rigorous or challenging enough. There is a belief, maybe, that students don't really learn from those open activities; they are just being entertained. Open materials are not of high quality because they are free; anything that is given away has to be lower quality than something one pays for. Open teaching practices are just not effective for ensuring that students know the content. There isn't enough time in the class to cover all the content, so additional activities can't be added in.

Fear

Faculty often feel that as part of their evaluation they need to demonstrate their content expertise. Further, evaluators may view open pedagogy as less rigorous and less quality than traditional practices. This is especially problematic for non-tenured, part-time or contingent faculty whose renewal is dependent on quality observations and evaluation.

Some faculty fear students' reactions to open practices. What happens if students choose not to do the work? Students have been trained in a particular system of learning, just as faculty have. Further, sometimes students resist open activities because they are fearful or unfamiliar with the expectations, and the activities are challenging, asking them to engage fully and create, which makes some feel uncomfortable.

I have also seen faculty fearful of sharing their practices and ideas with others because they are afraid of being judged or critiqued by other faculty (see above for the self-defeating cycle.) It is hard to be open when you are fearing judgement. It is hard to take risks when you are afraid. If administrators and faculty leaders don't understand or see value in open pedagogical practices, it is hard to create an environment where those practices can thrive.

The Prestige Economy

photo by samantha veneruso

There is a prestige economy in academia. There is fear that if you give away your ideas, you will lose prestige, especially in some hyper-competitive environments. On one side, there is the idea that if you aren't paid for something, then your work isn't valuable. On the other side, there is the sense that if you share your ideas and materials too freely, that you will be left with nothing and someone else will profit through exposure, and money (which we know is an illusion) that comes with that exposure. It is hard to be generous when you are in an environment that doesn't value, support or reciprocate generosity.

Other more common and obvious barriers are time and technological expertise, but ultimately, I think these fit into the categories above. If the culture values and supports open practices, and supports people to take risks, then time and technological expertise become moot because people will have the support and trust to learn.

There are more, I am sure, but I was trying to sketch out an ecosystem of what some of the barriers are. I would be interested in others takes on this. My perspectives might not be valid.

About the Author

Samantha Streamer Veneruso is a Professor of English at Montgomery College, a 2 year community college outside of Washington D.C. She is an advocate of all things community college, students, open practices, and critical pedagogy. @Professorsv

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7.

OPEN PEDAGOGY: A RESPONSE TO DAVID WILEY

Suzan Koseoglu

Originally published on April 21, 2017

What is Open Pedagogy? David Wiley recently asserted:

"...there's apparently a temptation to characterize good educational practice as open educational practice. But that's not what open means.

As I've argued many times, the difference between free and open is that open is "free plus." Free plus what? Free plus the 5R permissions. ... open pedagogy is the set of teaching and learning practices only possible or practical in the context of the 5R permissions. Or, to operationalize, open pedagogy is the set of teaching and learning practices only possible or practical when you are using OER."

I'm, however, inclined to think about open pedagogy as a philosophy of teaching and learning that in its core, as Maha suggested, has an ethos of sharing and social justice. I'm under the spell of bell hooks right now so I will define open pedagogy as the way she frames it in her book Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope:

Intentional approaches in teaching that encourage students to have "the *will* to explore different perspectives and change one's mind as new information is presented" (emphasis mine).

Open pedagogy may include the 5Rs of OER (Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix, Redistribute content), or it may not; the discussion on 5Rs to me is simply an issue of method, not methodology (the broad philosophical orientation to the methods used). Open pedagogy might enable many methods, in other words ways of doing things, to achieve its goals. Take Clint Lalonde's Digital Humanities students who shared their work online without open licenses, take the awesome open courses offered by the Virginia Commonwealth University (I wrote my dissertation on one of their courses). Are we saying that these educators haven't been engaging in open pedagogy? That they were using some other method simply because their focus is not on 5Rs?

In a reflective post Sheila Mc Neill posted a resource by Bronwyn Hegarty titled Attributes of Open Pedagogy. This is more comprehensive than Wiley's framing of open pedagogy but, again, I think there is a confusion here between the application of specific methods (which are context-dependent) and a larger

paradigm of teaching and learning centering on sharing and social justice (or sharing for the aim of social justice).

bell hooks writes:

"Throughout my academic career I have sought the spaces of openness, fixing my attention less on the ways colleagues are closed and more and searching for the place of possibility" [for positive change].

What are our "spaces of possibility"? How do we construct those spaces and nurture democratic learning environments where people get exposed to different perspectives, challenge the way they view the world and their position in it? How can we help our students, and one another, have the will to learn enthusiastically and passionately, despite all the difficulties that come with deep learning?

Why does it matter to have this discussion on the meaning of open pedagogy? Because openness is contextual and messy. As Maha says:

"When we call anything "open" we need to clarify: What are we opening, how are we opening it, for whom, and why?"

I'm ending my post with a quote from Rajeev Balasubramanyam or this ~~rant~~ post will go forever. This piece is on artists' responses to right wing politics but there is a lot we can apply to education. Rajeev says:

"The artist of faith is able not only to live inside of this uncertainty, but to create from it, to surrender to the unknown and, by doing so, to make peace with it. This is a political act not least because it is the one thing that fundamentalists of every hue will always oppose. Fundamentalists seek to erase uncertainty, to replace the unknown with crass, bludgeoning answers, but the writer of faith gazes into this void with open eyes, even, or perhaps particularly, when she is afraid, seeking to share what she sees with others in who find themselves in similar situations."

*Watch and participate in the open pedagogy discussion here. More information is available on Maha's blog.

About the Author

Suzan is a researcher and educator with a PhD in Learning Technologies, Curriculum and Instruction. Suzan's recent research focuses on gender inequality and feminist theory and practice in open and distance learning. Suzan is on Twitter: @suzanKoseoglu, and occasionally blogs at https://differentreadings.com/

Other works:

ODL and Feminism: Looking Back to Move Forward

30 Years of Gender Inequality and Implications on Curriculum Design in Open and Distance Learning

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8.

OPEN EDUCATION IN PALESTINE: A TOOL FOR LIBERATION

Javiera Atenas

Last week I had the opportunity to travel to Palestine, to the West Bank to visit our OpenMed partners for the Palestine OER strategy Forum. Palestine, as land, is not always available in the modern maps, because if you search for it in Google Maps, you can see the West Bank and Gaza, but its name, State of Palestine it has been simply wiped out from today's most popular cartographic search engine. So due to it's political history, this Open Education trip has let me thinking about what I am doing, and why....

Our trip started in Ramallah, a beautiful and vibrant city, where you can see the Mediterranean sea from distance, but if you were born there, and you don't have the right credentials, you don't hold the right to get there, so you can only see the sea from the top the city, but you are separated from it because there is a wall.

The first day we visited Nablus and its university [An-Najah], where we were welcomed with cardamom infused coffee and kunefe, and we were told about the story and the current situation of HE in Palestine, they explained us how it works and how many students they have, how do they teach and how they are innovating, despite lack of access to things we normally take for granted, like internationalisation, as they cannot have visiting students because the visas granted are shorter than the semesters, and because there are very little visas granted for foreign academics.

Our trip continued to Jerusalem, the holy land, we took a taxi that transferred us to the first checkpoint of the day, because Palestinian cars are not allowed to circulate in Israeli roads. We crossed the checkpoint by foot (me in crutches) and I must say, that having to do this myself reminded me on how fortunate I am. I was born in Chile, therefore I hold a Chilean passport and I can go almost whatever I want without a visa, but also, I hold the British citizenship, and as such, I can move freely across almost every country, with very little exceptions without asking for permission. Crossing a checkpoint, from the perspective of a free citizen is overwhelming, because you stand on a queue, you are surrounded by fences, and when you manage to cross that metallic revolving door, your items are scanned and you must pass a metal detector and then, you are asked why you are there, in my case, and despite the politeness of the border officer, I did feel immensely sad.

Jerusalem, once you reach it takes you back in time, is lively, and vibrant, and magic, and crazy, the colours, the aroma, the voices, and sometimes you don't know if you are in the past, the present or the future, and even though when you are not a spiritual person (like me) you feel that there is something special and magic in that city, where every stone you touch means something to someone, and where peace, faith and devotion can be seen in every corner.

From Jerusalem we moved to Bethlehem, and again the place seemed magic to me, because you realise that if Jesus was born in 2017 he will be a Palestinian, therefore he may need to hold a permission to cross to Jerusalem and he and his parents will be subject to checkpoints and scrutiny before entering Jerusalem, and you think why this is all so unfair, because there is the Nativity Church, and then, there is the wall, and there is a checkpoint that separates two cities that are holy, sacred and still alive. Once you see the wall, that wall, your heart breaks, you don't understand why, and your head starts spinning, and while it spins, you have to cross another checkpoint, by foot, to get back to Ramallah.

The day of the [Palestine OER strategy forum](#) started with our Palestinian colleagues telling us what they are doing and us telling them about [OpenMed](#), but there was one presentation that really inspired me, called Open Education for Palestine in which professor Marwan Tarazi stated that Open Education is a tool for liberation. He mentioned that under the current occupation, openness becomes essential to Palestine at philosophical level, and that the educators in Palestine need to open up because, in his words "if you don't open up, someone will do under their own terms, therefore, if you don't have an agenda, someone else will do".
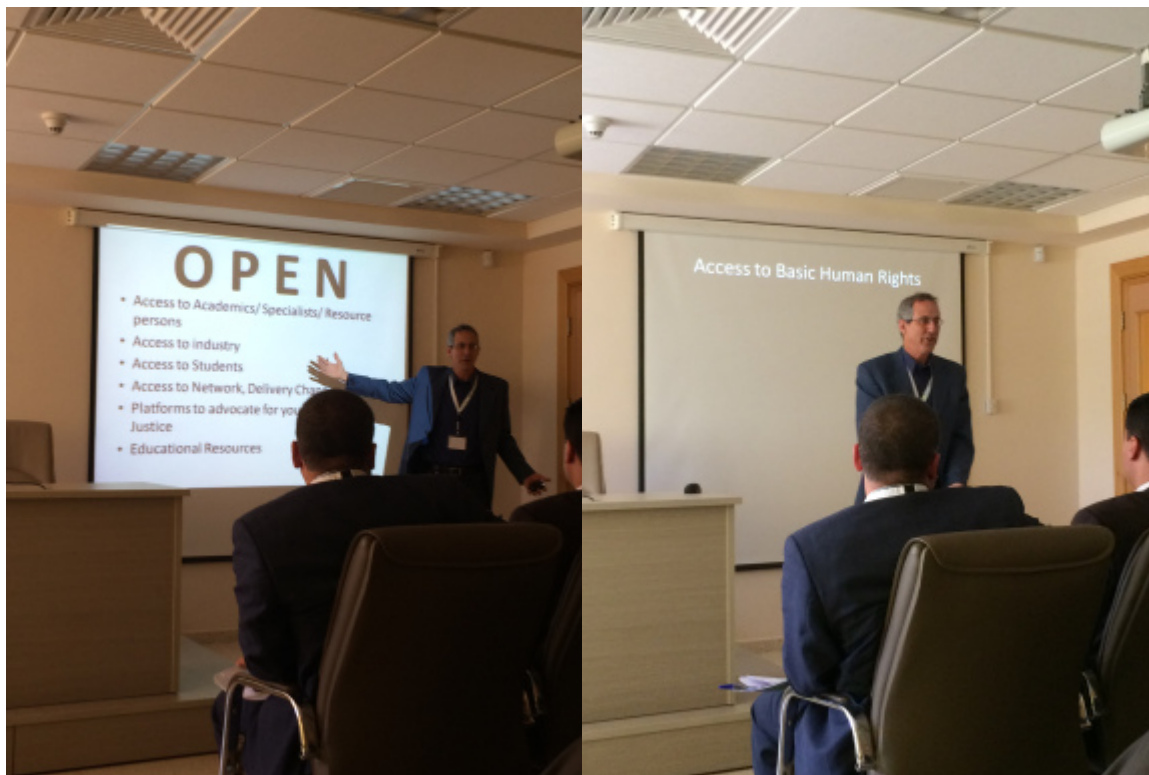
His presentation let me thinking, why I do what I do in the way I do it, I do believe in Openness, yes, but I never considered openness as a tool for liberation, yes for social justice, yes as an instrument for active citizenship, or as a tool to promote human rights, and this is not just about Open Education, but also concerns Open Data and Open Access, and also, Open Science, and his thoughts got me inspired, because sometimes the liberation has to do with becoming free from colonial and dominant perspectives, when we do teach or train communities in countries which are under the [awful] global south euphemism, we are liberating us/them from a discurse that is oppressive, allowing people and countries to grow accordingly to their own culture, telling stories from their own perspective and not playing the economy game imposed by the neoliberal rule.

The realities of these countries are diverse, as such is their culture, therefore access to material goods and to decent life standards are subject to the oppression of neoliberalism, capitalism, and predatory economic models which affect the access to basic human rights, proper education, a good and strong health system, an income that allows you to feed your loved ones without having to work in infra-human conditions.

When we do Open (Education, Data, Government, Science and Access) we need to consider that certain rules are better skipped, in the case of Open Education there is a tendency that does not exist in other Open fields, which is to consider Open just what is under the 5 Rs, therefore OER tends to mean resources are openly licensed and follow OE rules as if this was a dogma, but Open means to me, able to share your content, to detach your research from predatory – corporate publishers and to ignore for example the University Rankings, because their metrics are in a system that may not be helping to achieve success under each region or

countries our own terms, because the rules are white and Anglo-Saxon, and each country and region tend to play at other rhythms, and ways of work.

Opening up means to me to share, to do things in a transparent way, to collaborate, to support and to provide the tools for educators and students to be critical thinkers, to challenge and to question, to become communities and not to follow a rule that tells you if you are open enough according to someone else's agenda, so just be open, under your own terms, share, distribute, communicate, participate, engage, thinking that before Open rules there are human rights, and that accessing quality education is one of these.

PS1: Thanks to Birzeit University and An Najah Universities for the invitation, specially to Rania, Rula and Saida, you are very inspiring women, also to Abdellatif and Marwan, this event has been by far the most inspiring I have ever attended.

PS2: Thanks to Cristina, Fabio,Daniel, Isidro, Katherine, Sarah, Javier, Antonio and to the rest of the OpenMed team, you people are amazing.

PS3: Any typos, blame the minions, they are not good at grammar because they don't like to go to school.

PS4: All the pictures are CCBYNC, I took them so I do what I want with them.

PS5: This is my personal perspective and are my views and may not represent the views of my employers, that's why I'm using my personal blog to post it.

About the Author

Information Scientist with a PhD in Education. Working in Open Data, Open Education and Policies. Co-coordinator of the Open Education Working Group, Education lead at the Latin American Initiative for Open Data and Associated Researcher at the Universitat de Barcelona.

Other works by the author

Attribution

9.

OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, CROSSED PURPOSES

Simon Ensor

Originally published on May 2, 2017

Pirate's bay play area.

Play mats, play house to hide in, to climb on, to run around, wheels to turn, seesaw to rock...

Kids of varying sizes were rushing around shrieking, babbling, laughing in varying languages, often at crossed purposes.

There were moments of understanding, moments of perplexity.

There were moments of synchronicity of action, moments of chaos, moments of inertia.

The ship sailed on on the grey, grey sea.

Parents looked on, only too happy to see their offspring safely occupied.

God's space.

One parent, stepped into the kids' play area, took out a towel, laid it down in a corner, stood still a few moments, eyes closed, silently held her hands raised, angled outwards away from her heart, then in one slow, graceful rhythmic movement knelt.

She then bowed down, head and hands to the deck, prostrate.

She waited a few moments in embryonic prayer, stood up, stood still then repeated the ritual.

An older woman, similarly veiled looked after two small children who continued to play.

The ship sailed on.

The kids continued to play their different games, in their different languages, oblivious to all else.

Two parents, perhaps Dutch, I saw, staring quizzically, perhaps critically at the prayer ritual.

Was it an incongruous adult intrusion here?

Or something else?

I was thankful that I was questioned thus.

I made notes quickly in Evernote.

I wrote the words to a song.

"Oh Lord. Please don't let me be misunderstood."

I don't know why.

I couldn't quite remember the rest of the words.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=136

Language lessons.

My daughter came over to see me.

"How do you say: I am French, in German?" she asked.

I tried to remember.

I must have learnt that once.

Open hearts, open minds, crossed purposes.

I have been thinking today about discussions which have been going on about *"Open Pedagogy"*.

I watched a discussion on attempts to define the term, it was brought about thanks to the opening efforts of Maha Bali.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=136

If the video of the discussion is openly available on Youtube.

Is that video an open educational resource? I think to myself.

Open educational resources.

It is only open to those who have

- internet access.
- Youtube access
- time to watch it.
- permission to watch it
- understanding of the language used.

If I am watching this discussion, it is because my attention has been drawn to it by people that I find myself identifying with, and by questions which I myself am concerned by.

If I am able to identify with these people is it not because I become part of an (academic) language community?

It is only an educational resource in so far as I choose, or someone chooses that I might learn from watching it.

If I say it is educational but you don't learn from it, how is it an educational resource?

"Open", it appears, has pretty much become a brand for what are termed *OER* or *Open Education(al?) Resources.*

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Such *"resources"* or *"content"* are open to retain, reuse, revise, remix, redistribute and are licensed accordingly.

Such *"resources"* may be packaged as courses with more or less clearly defined didacticisation.

Such "resources" seem to be associated very closely with the internet.

Licenses however open are surely a recognition of enclosure, and a desire for attribution.

One might ask if folk songs, music, tales, games shared before the internet, sound recordings, books might be considered as "open content", and/or "open education resources".

Many of "Open Education Resources" seem to be so named because they are made by people who are employed in closed institutions of "education".

I am not sure how far one can use the word "education" for "resources" even if they are aimed at being "educative", "educational" puposes, or use in an institution of "education".

It is not open or educational or a resource because you stick a logo on it.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Your open education maybe my/our oppression.

Is Wikipedia an educational resource or an informational resource?

Is informational synonymous with educational?

I think (hope) not.

Is this blog a resource or a pile of crap? (both/and?)

Is a pile of crap a resource?

Is a conversation a resource?

Is a memory a resource?

"Open Educational Practices" or OEP are, it appears, closely associated with the internet.

(I note my hesitation around education or educational – are we talking about open education or open educational practice/open education resources or open educational resources?)

The discussion in the Youtube video is closely associated with academia.

Academia and academics depend on citations, on attribution, on licensing for their living.

Academia might be a jungle but it ain't (very) open.

Conferences and journals are generally open to those who pay/are paid.

Martin Weller in [this recent post](#) gives a working definition of OEP

"Open educational practice covers any significant change in educational practice afforded by the open nature of the internet."

Well, surely we can have significant change in educational practice which is afforded by the open nature of the internet which is anything but *"open"* in terms of education.

Open pedagogy.

So can open pedagogy only be open if it is closely associated with the internet? (I think not)

I went and read (on internet) a useful post of Jim Luke's entitled ["What's open? Are OER necessary?"](#)

I found that educational in its stimulating of reflection to engage in annotation.

The link is here:
https://via.hypothes.is/https://econproph.com/2017/04/23/whats-open-are-oer-necessary/

Well, before rambling on, I thought I would find an OER which would help me unravel a few terms.

- education
- teaching
- pedagogy
- didactics
- instruction
- schooling.

I have the impression that often when speaking about pedagogy we speak at crossed purposes.

Here it is: [What is pedagogy?](#)

We are hasty to define "Open pedagogy", "Open resources" at our peril.

We need first to start unpicking such terms in our own contexts.

- education from schooling
- history from propaganda
- teaching from drilling.
- teaching from informing
- knowing from memorising
- knowing how from knowing to do
- pedagogy from didactics

We need to unpick our connections to what appears an *"open"* space to see how it is framed.

What I take away from the hangout about open is the enthusiasm for learning and joy at engaging in conversation.

What I feel is that this work of conversing across boundaries within the bounds of a Google hangout has value only if it is fun, ongoing, and leads us out from our local contexts to question our differing and universal boundaries to further our mutual educations.

The value of having open hearts and minds is to appreciate and respect divergence.

Bumping into each other and speaking with our crossed purposes, we need at least, a feeling of reassurance and safety that our play space is a safe space.

Do definitions really count?

Don't we simply need places/spaces/concepts/yearnings/fears to bring us together?

Does it matter if you can't define love?

Maybe I should put it another way: are god, open, love, as concepts, awesome precisely because of the struggle to define them?

Fuzzy understanding.

My daughter was terribly excited to communicate her new German to the little boy with blonde hair.

I am not sure she pronounced the term for French correctly.

He smiled.

She smiled.

What counts?

The ship sails on.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU WANT TO GET OFF?? THIS IS OPEN! pic.twitter.com/PenzG7rWSz

— Simon Ensor (@sensor63) April 15, 2017

We really need to go back to what we mean by education, I think.

We really need to go back and think about what values are carried within education.

Is open education like taking kids to the zoo to look at other animals behind their bars?

Does open imply colonial?

Does open imply capitalistic?

Is the internet simply a means to extract resources from subject humans?

Return to Pirates' Bay

I think back to Pirates' Bay.

Do we have space in our education systems for play, fun, peace, silence, respect, spirituality?

If not, what can we do about it...together?

Can one have open pedagogy with out open minds and open hearts?

Can one have pedagogy without open minds and open hearts?

Can one have science without wonder, without poetry, without art, without unknowing, without others?

"Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."

John Dewey.
"Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life but is life itself."

John Dewey.
Footnote.

> Thought for day. pic.twitter.com/FPARrVJad1

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.'" Lilla Watson, indigenous Australian activist

— Simon Ensor (@sensor63) April 9, 2017

About the Author

I don't consider myself as a scholar or an academic.

Others might, whatever...

I don't mind.

I am incorrigibly curious, I think, I ask uncomforting questions in English or French, I write, I draw, I paint, I act, I laugh and weep.

I'm Simon, @sensor63, I was Dodger in another life.

I am an atheist brought up in an evangelical family...that left its marks.

I have some sort of obtuse faith.

I work in Université Clermont Auvergne in France as an English language teacher and as a researcher.

I was always a researcher when others wouldn't have thought so.

I learn, thanks to the many generous people who have taken time to let me listen to them.

I blog stuff when it refuses to leave me in peace...

https://tachesdesens.blogspot.com

Attribution

10.

ANTIGONISH 2.0: A WAY FOR HIGHER ED TO HELP SAVE THE WEB

Bonnie Stewart

Originally published on May 8, 2017

I remember when the World Wide Web was going to revolutionize everything. I don't mean the techno-centric narrative of automation and *The Jetsons* that bursts repeatedly out of our culture, like a pimple, every generation or so. I mean the web that was going to connect us to each other. The one that was going to allow us all to produce and contribute to a shared world of digital artifacts. One without gatekeepers.

More than a decade after Web 2.0 heralded a connected, participatory world and three decades after Richard Stallman's "GNU Manifesto,"[1] the web has instead become, in far too many of its corners, a fetid stream of ugliness and sensationalism. The web has become media. Attention—not voice or connection—is the currency of media.

Mike Caulfield, director of blended and networked learning at Washington State University, talks about the structures behind the current state of the web in the opening column[2] in this *EDUCAUSE Review* New Horizons series: how the social media model of stream communications amplified decontextualization and reactive response on the web.[3] Technology entrepreneur Anil Dash also laments the web we lost.[4]

Meanwhile, I wander around in a social sphere increasingly calibrated for constant hits of scandal and outrage, and like a frog boiling in a pot, I wonder what to do. Hyperpartisan sites—run on business models that profit from both sides of the binary[5]—fuel an attention economy bent to the purposes of autocratic governance. Facebook algorithms and 24-hour news and platforms that privilege retweets over replies[6] feed out a steady diet of toxic narratives that encourage polarization and anger and lashing out.

If the web was indeed a revolution, it sometimes seems to have entered its Reign of Terror phase. But the resolution doesn't lie in a return to the equivalent of the monarchy—the old gatekeepers of institutional knowledge and power. *That* path leads to another Napoleon. Rather, the same higher education institutions whose hierarchy and gatekeeping the web was supposed to open up and democratize[7] are increasingly necessary partners in building *any* kind of democratic future for society, full stop.

That's because the web is a big part of where we live now. But we neither understand it nor know how

to use it for learning. What we need is not a revolution, but a way to develop the local and global literacies needed to foster functional democratic participation. This won't just spontaneously generate out there on online platforms such as Reddit or Instagram. Neither will it happen in classrooms. Or community halls. But if we can find a way to weave all three together into a functional model, maybe there's a possibility.

The model I'm interested in was developed nearly a hundred years ago, on the North Atlantic coast of North America, in a landscape populated with fishing villages and hard-luck mining towns. Called "The Antigonish Movement,"[8] this renowned adult education experiment of the 1920s–1940s based in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, led to the development of local credit unions that still dot the landscape around Maritime Canada. Its vision was as education-focused as it was economic, with an emphasis on building literacy as an avenue toward civic participation. The Antigonish Movement addressed people's poverty and lack of agency by creating collaborative capacity for pushing back on the structures of their disenfranchisement.

I want to try it again. But I want to focus on a different sort of poverty and disenfranchisement: our current, widespread incapacity to deal with our contemporary information ecosystem and what the web has become.[9] The attention economy and the rising specter of "alternative facts" create demographic and ideological divides that operate to keep all of us disenfranchised and disempowered. Antigonish 2.0, therefore, is a community capacity-building project about media literacy and civic engagement.[10] In this era of profound political polarization, disinformation, and fake news, the project aims to frame and foster narratives of democracy and contribution. Antigonish 2.0 revisions the cooperative adult education tradition of the Antigonish Movement for a digitized world.

The original Antigonish Movement focused on

1. reframing people's understanding of the structures shaping their lives and prospects, and
2. exerting collective action within and on those structures.

It did so through three key structural components: mass meetings, a school for leaders, and study clubs. Antigonish 2.0 draws on that three-layer infrastructure to galvanize collective action at global, regional, and local levels.

Layer One. This distributed international network—already populated with 100-plus media and education leaders from around the world—will be our web-based equivalent to "mass meetings." Network members will develop, curate, and maintain an up-to-date resource hub, build presence and belonging using the Twitter hashtag #Antigonish2, and mentor other layers in their local communities. The network is the core of the model and how it will adapt its domain knowledge as the information ecosystem changes and shifts.[11]

Layer Two. Focused on institutional capacity-building and inclusive citizenship in K–12 and higher ed classrooms, this layer will develop regional hubs of expertise, resources, and conversation. These hubs will be institutional and centered around professional development events, as well as around a July 2018 summer institute—our "school for leaders"—in the founding town of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The institute will

bring together leaders from widespread institutional contexts to explore how the web can be utilized to combat digital and democratic polarization in the workplace and classroom.

Layer Three. This layer consists of the "study clubs": localized workshops for people in their own communities. These outreach events are the heart of Antigonish 2.0: hands-on opportunities to develop the practices and literacies needed by critical citizens and consumers in an attention economy. These coordinated local gatherings—workshops at libraries, discussion series in community halls, even kitchen parties—will aim to engage citizens in collective action based on local interests. These events will teach core media literacy—how to identify fake news—but will also encourage people to work together to build narratives and skills for thriving in an age of information and misinformation. Facilitators for this layer of the project will be trained at Layers One and Two but will work in their local communities.

Amy Collier, associate provost for digital learning at Middlebury College, speaks of the current juncture in our collective society as one in which "the work of education…cannot look like it did before."[12] I think she's right. Antigonish 2.0 offers a call to colleges and universities around the globe to consider how their resources—staff, faculty, students, space, digital infrastructures, brands—can be deployed at all three layers of the initiative.

But in order to *do* that, higher ed has to be willing *not* to look the way it has always looked. It has to be willing to lend a portion of its infrastructure and its time and its endowments to this integrated model of network plus institution plus community, even though this model does not factor in prestige rankings or research dollars. It has to be willing to look to people both in and *beyond* classroom walls as part of its purview.

Higher ed has done this before, in Antigonish and in many other renowned community and adult education projects. This time its success demands the cohering factor of the network layer, because the domain knowledge and web literacies required to turn this ship of state and social media around are not present at the helm of most classrooms today. Success also demands looking out to communities to build, together, the kind of civil society that can value what higher ed has to offer, beyond just credentials.

Higher ed is the key source of the cognitive surplus that will build Antigonish 2.0's resources and knowledge hubs. Most of the volunteers for the project's Layer One network are higher ed employees, volunteering personal time that's nonetheless based in expertise and knowledge they've built through higher ed programs, higher ed jobs, higher ed grant projects, and higher ed Internet infrastructure.

The web was supposed to open up higher ed. In a model like Antigonish 2.0, higher ed may be the lever needed to reopen the web to its participatory, democratic potential.

I believe *that* would be a revolution worth aiming for.

Notes

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4. Anil Dash, "The Web We Lost," *Anil Dash,* December 13, 2012.

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6. Jay McGregor, "Retweets Are Up, Replies Are Down: How Twitter Has Evolved in the Last Seven Years," *Forbes,* March 31, 2014.

7. John Seely Brown, "Growing Up Digital: How the Web Changes Work, Education, and the Ways People Learn," *Change* (March/April 2000).

8. M. M. Coady, *Masters of Their Own Destiny: The Story of the Antigonish Movement of Adult Education through Economic Cooperation* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939).

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10. "Media Literacy, Community, Citizenship," [http://theory.cribchronicles.com/2017/03/14/media-literacy-community-citizenship/] *Antigonish 2.0,* March 14, 2017.

11. Mike Caulfield, "Yes, Digital Literacy: But Which One?" *Hapgood,* December 19, 2016.

12. Amy Collier, "'It Should Be Necessary to Start': Critical Digital Pedagogy in Troubled Political Times," *The Red Pincushion,* March 3, 2017.

About the Author

Bonnie Stewart is an educator interested in the implications of digital networks for institutions and society. Assistant Professor of Online Pedagogy and Workplace Learning at the University of Windsor in Canada, Bonnie has an extensive background in digital education and adult learning. An early MOOC researcher and ethnographer of Twitter, Bonnie holds current Visiting Fellowships with the Open University of Catalonia in Spain, and with University of the Arts London, UK. Her research interests include educators' data literacies, and what it means to know, learn, and be a citizen in our current information ecosystem.

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Other works:

Stewart, B. (2020). The Open Page Project: Putting digital learning principles into practice for pre-service educators. Journal of Teaching and Learning, 14(1), 59-70. https://doi.org/10.22329/JTL.V14I1.6265

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11.

WHAT IS DIGCIZ AND WHY I AM NOT MARINA ABRAMOVIC: THOUGHTS ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

Autumm Caines

Originally published on June 10, 2017

Theory

Alec Couros and Katia Hildebrandt just finished a round of facilitation in the #DigCiz conversation where they challenged us to think about moving away from a personal responsibility model of digital citizenship. In a joint blog post they spend time distinguishing digital citizenship from cybersaftey and present Jole Westheimer's work identifying three different types of citizens to ultimately ask "What kind of (digital) citizen" are we talking about.

Additionally, this week, outside of our #DigCiz hashtag, Josie Fraser blogged about some views around digital citizenship. Here we see Josie, reminiscent of Katia and Alec, making a distinction between digital citizenship and what she identifies as e-safety but also setting it apart from digital literacy. Josie presents a venn diagram where digital citizenship is one part of a larger interaction overlapping with e-safety and digital literacy.

In other DigCiz news, this week a group of us (Sundi and I included) who presented at the annual ELI conference in Houston on digital citizenship in the liberal arts published an EDUCAUSE Review article highlighting four different digital citizenship initiatives inside of our institutions.

All of this is on the tails of our first week of #DigCiz where Mia Zamora and Bonnie Stewart troubled the idea of digital citizenship. In a post about this Bonnie artfully lays out the conflict of utopian narratives of the web as a tool for democracy with the realities of what I'm more and more just lumping under Shoshana Zubhoff's concept of Surveillance Capitalism though you could just say it is the general Silicon Valley ethos.

But I want to get back to Katia and Alec's call to move the conversation beyond personal responsibility. Often, digital citizenship is lumped in with things like digital/information literacy, nettiquette, online safety,

and a whole host of other concepts. Often these are just variations of issues that existed way before the "digital" but are complicated by the digital.

I'm considering Katia and Alec's call, reflecting on all of these posts and articles as well as the last year and several months of thinking and conversing about this topic on #DigCiz and I can't help but feel like we are in the weeds on this concept.

So here it is – my foundational, basic, details ripped away, 10,000 foot view at digital citizenship where things like safety and literacy are part of the model but not the whole thing.

I've thought about digital citizenship like this for some time and Josie's post reminded me the idea of representing it as a venn diagram and though some of the overlaps are messy I think that is normal.

I really want to focus and drill down on digital citizenship so I put it in the middle and zoom out from there. The factors that I see at play around digital citizenship are environments and people. In terms of people there is the individual and then others. Since this is "digital" citizenship they are digital environments and identities. The items in the overlaps are messy part. This is draft one.

Draft 1 – Autumm's Digital Citizenship model CC-BY-ND

This is a really broad model but I think that digital citizenship is a really broad concept and that a narrow model would not do. I think part of the problem that we get into with confusing digital citizenship with digital literacy, cybersafety, netiquette or any other number of similar ideas has to do with narrowly defined models that do not allow for liminality or overlap.

In theory that is... but that brings me to the second half of this post.

Practice

I hope that the web still can exist as a place for community building, artistic expression, and civic discourse but I fear that use for it is shrinking under the pressures of its uses as an advertising and surveillance tool.

I worry that as we are used and targeted by systems that we have been normalized to the experience of being used and targeted. Resulting in us feeling that using and targeting others does not seem like such a big deal.
***

[In 1974 performance artist Marina Abramovic produced and performed Rhythm 0.](#)

I rather like the idea of performance art. Making an artistic statement not through polished practice but rather through the practice of a lived moment.

In Rhythm 0, Abramovic wanted to experiment with giving the public pure access to engage with her actual in-the-flesh self.

She stood for six hours in front of a table with all manner of objects for pleasure and pain with a statement that told the public that they could engage with her however they saw fit.

She was a type of living doll.

Quickly the public forgot that she was a person. She had told them that she was an object after all. So fast they moved from tickling her with the feathers or kissing her on the cheek to cutting her with the razors. She said she was ready to die for this experiment. She said she took full responsibility. One of the objects was a loaded gun. Someone went as far as to put it in her own hand and hold it to her head and see if they could make her pull the trigger.

But why? Why when given the chance to engage with her would people choose to harm her of all the choices of things that they could do to her?

What happens when we interact with people? Is it about us or is it about them? Are we seeing people with lives and needs and wants and fears and all the messy that is human? Or are we seeing an object that we want to interaction with... for our sense of good or bad or pain or pleasure?

I'm not sure much has changed since 1974 when Marina Abramovic first performed this piece. I'm not sure if given the choice between tools of violence and tools of peace that the public will choose peace even today.

I'm not Marina Abramovic

#DigCiz is not Rythem 0
***

I think we need to look at ourselves and our communities and ask why we are engaging with each other. Is it out of a selfish need for engagement? Is there a hope for beneficial reciprocation? Is there a concept of consent being considered?

I think we need to look at our tools and wonder why we are engaging with them and the companies behind them. As they say if you are not paying you are probably the product.

Environment shapes identity. Identity shapes other's identities. I fear that we are shaping each other mindlessly. I fear that we are not just shaping each other but that the predatory environments we use are additionally shaping us.

I think we start to change by knowing ourselves first and then engaging where we think we will find recipciotaton, and by recipciotation I don't mean comments and I don't mean reply. I mean really trying to listen to one another and getting to know one another. Caring about how we think the other may want to engage and not just satisfying some hunger for engagement.

Going Forward

#DigCiz continues next week and I'm hopeful that we will start to explore these nuances of engagement even deeper as [Maha Bali](#) and [Kate Bowles](#) take the wheel. Keep an eye on #DigCiz on key social media outlets and [digciz.org](#)

I'd also like to thank [Sundi Richard](#), [Maha Bali](#), and [Mia Zamora](#) for looking at a very early draft of this piece and giving much needed feedback. You each help me be better every day – thank you.

About the Author

Autumm Caines is a liminal space.

Part technologist, part artist, part manager, part synthesizer

Mostly educator

Passionate about the use of technology in education and the many differing facets of how technology impacts society and culture, I like spending time at the place where differing disciplines intersect.

A first generation high school graduate and first in family college graduate, I'm dedicated to the transformative experience of education for those to whom the opportunity often does not present itself.

I currently work as an Instructional Designer at the University of Michigan – Dearborn prior to which I had professional appointments at St. Norbert College and Capital University. I'm also a Co-Director of Virtually Connecting and I use my work in Virtually Connecting to explore questions of

presence and spontaneity in synchronous virtual conversations as well as equity and inclusion in online community.

Autumm.org

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12.

LOCKS ON OUR BRIDGES: CRITICAL AND GENERATIVE LENSES ON OPEN EDUCATION

Amy Collier

Originally published on June 23, 2017

These are my notes from a keynote I gave at Plymouth State University on June 1, 2017, as part of their ATI Camp. [The video of the presentation is available here](#) (also, don't miss Rajiv's and Robin's talks). This talk is based on [an open access paper Jen Ross and I published earlier this year in Open Praxis](#).

The Pont des Arts in Paris. Lovers from around the world placed locks on the bridge, often inscribed with their names, to signal the eternal nature of their love. It's a romantic gesture...full of hope and dreams...once you lock your love onto the bridge and throw away the key (I imagine a myriad of keys at the bottom of the Seine river), your love will last forever.

I had the opportunity to see the Pont des Arts a few years ago on a family trip to Paris. Here is a picture of my son checking out the thousands of locks. I'm fascinated by the stories of things and, well, locks on bridges tell a lot of stories. Some locks were decorated, extravagant; some were simple and humble. Some had dates, wishes written on them. Some were nameless.

As much as I love the stories that can be told about the locks, there is a darker side to the locks on the Pont des Arts. You see, as more and more people began participating in this ritual, the bridge began to wear out under the weight of the locks. As the organization No Love Locks says: "Our bridges can no longer withstand your gestures of love. Set them free by declaring your love with #lovewithoutlocks."

Eventually, parts of the bridge collapsed into the river. When the Parisian authorities finally removed the locks, they removed somewhere between 45 tons – 65 tons of locks from the bridge.

Now it would be pretty straightforward for us to draw a connection between the unintended consequences of closed/locked practices in education to the locks on our bridges. The weight of the costs of education, as Rajiv talked about in his keynote yesterday, may place crushing pressure on our students and cause them to experience significant long-term damage (financial and otherwise). This makes a lot of sense to me—students are experiencing heavy financial pressures and it seems that those will only increase in the current administration. So yes, please start removing those locks. And if this analogy is helpful in your discussions of open education on your campuses, by all means use it.

But to me, the story of the Pont des Arts is also a story about unintended consequences of open practices. Despite our goals, our dreams, our choices could have unintended and damaging consequences. The point of my presentation today is to also look at the unintended consequences of **openness** and to take a critical stance on the ways openness and closedness are framed in opposition. As someone who was working at Stanford during the MOOC craze a few years ago, I feel confident saying that the word "open" has become a way to describe a whole range of digital practices, some of which could be seen as antithetical to the vision advanced by early advocates of openness. Proponents of openness have struggled with the need to make openness inclusive while also taking a stance against forms of openness that may work against their values. The term open, when framed only against the idea of closed, creates a situation where a whole range of things that could be considered open are deemed closed and a whole range of things that are considered closed are deemed as open. The key is that, within the notion of openness, there is a lot happening around our values, our ideologies, our politics. What we believe the state of the world and of education and of students should be.

[Audrey Watters, at a keynote at OpenCon a few years ago, said this](#):

"We act — at our peril — as if 'open' is politically neutral, let alone politically good or progressive. Indeed, we sometimes use the word to stand in place of a politics of participatory democracy. We presume that, because something is 'open' that it necessarily contains all the conditions for equality or freedom or justice. We use 'open' as though it is free of ideology, ignoring how much 'openness,' particularly as it's used by technologists, is closely intertwined with 'meritocracy' — this notion, a false one, that 'open' wipes away inequalities, institutions, biases, history, that 'open' 'levels the playing field.'

  If we believe in equality, if we believe in participatory democracy and participatory culture, if we believe in people and progressive social change, if we believe in sustainability in all its environmental and economic and psychological manifestations, then we need to do better than slap that adjective 'open' onto our projects and act as though that's sufficient or — and this is hard, I know — even sound."

I don't want to dissuade you from open practices and open educational resources, but I ask to consider the implications of openness and closedness and, rather than think of them as opposites, or solely as part of a spectrum, to consider them as always co-occurring and permeable. **I ask you to consider what practices "openness" reinforces, what assumptions, what openness tidies or obscures.**

"all forms of openness entail forms of closed-ness"

Photo by me. Hello, Cairo!

As Edwards (2015) says, "all forms of openness entail forms of closed-ness" (p. 253). Choices around open practices involve "selecting" and "occluding other possibilities" (p. 255) and, therefore, educators cannot claim openness as an educational value in its own right.

  But, as Edwards continues: "**The question is not whether to make education more open, but what forms of openness and closed-ness are justifiable.** To bring to the fore the paradoxical inter-relationship of open–closed-ness is to investigate the micro-practices of education and their powerful effects, the specific forms they take and the possibilities for alternative practices. It is to deconstruct openness as an inherently

worthwhile educational goal and bring to the fore explicit questions about the basis upon what specific forms of selectivity and closure are justifiable in particular educational practices, however open.”

My main thesis today is this: The opportunity for exploring openness and closedness, and boundary crossing / permeability among between them, provides the opportunity for us to critically question our educational and teaching practices. By adopting openness as an unquestionable or unassailable virtue, we run the risk of missing that opportunity. **It would be a mistake to do the exact same things we would do with open practices as we would do with closed practices.** Instead, we should explore how critical lenses like complexity theory and not-yetness, a term that my colleague Jen Ross and I coined a few years ago, can help us to approach openness with attention to issues of multiplicity, uncertainty, and transition –or what we can “boundary crossing” between openness and closedness. There is truly exciting and transformative work we can do as we critically explore openness and closedness.

[In a recent paper that my colleague Jen Ross and I wrote](#), we noted several critiques of the open movement and how many of those critiques help us to think more broadly and creatively about what our goals are when we pursue openness. Today, I want to highlight three key critical concerns that counter a utopian view of openness: 1) there are definitional issues with openness, and often a false binary is established between “open” and “closed.” (issues of definition also lead to problematic “openwashing” – the issues of branded digital content); 2) an overemphasis on access to content homogenizes learners and their contexts; 3) open educational practice does not attend sufficiently to issues of power and inclusion.

Let’s break these down.

1) Definitional issues. There is a false binary is established between “open” and “closed”—I have already discussed these a bit in my intro. These issues often have at their heart a tendency to frame openness as “good,” as in the statement made by several open advocates that “the opposite of open is broken.” There is a risk of foreclosing conversations about the a deeper, and more political, goals of openness.

Wikipedia is often held us as the ultimate success story for openness. And, to be fair, Wikipedia is pretty impressive. And, as Rajiv pointed out yesterday, working in Wikipedia can be a great way to give students voice and agency in the digital spaces they sometimes inhabit. In that vein, you could consider (and I think we mostly would consider) editing Wikipedia to be part of open practices. But, if we stop there we might miss to dig deeper into this open practice.

Wikipedia is driven by a need for consensus. An authoritative and accurate voice. In the many processes that Wikipedia editors undertake to provide authoritative articles, consensus drives out inclusivity, multiple voices, personality, nuance, creativity. And, in driving those things out, it becomes a lot less “open” than we might have originally thought. [As Mike Caulfield writes](#): “Ten of thousands of hours are spent editing Wikipedia’s top articles, but for the most part they aren’t spent coming up with new ways to explain things, or updating articles with new research. They are spent are the never-ending pulping out of voice, perspective, bias, and differing opinion about what belongs in the article. Only a sliver of writing – even good writing – makes it through.” It’s not that Wikipedia is “closed” either. It has been an impressive model of leveraging communities to put

forward and handle a lot of information. The issue is that simply branding Wikipedia as "open" can foreclose conversations about its areas/practices of openness and its areas/practices of closedness.

The definitional issues with open are how we end up with openwashing—a term that Audrey Watters defines as "having an appearance of open-source and open-licensing for marketing purposes, while continuing proprietary practices." It's akin to greenwashing—where businesses claim to be "green" because they make "green choices" that are about appearing eco-friendly while really being about the bottom line. You know, for a while there, lots of educational technology companies were going "open." What this meant is that a tech-related company, let's call it Pearson, would provide a platform for accessing and "reusing" branded content. Funny enough, when I look for Pearson's Open Learning initiative now...*<crickets>*

I'm not arguing that we should stringently define open and call everything that doesn't fit that definition "closed." That would be a mistake. We could waste a lot of effort building openness rubrics for how well something fits the 5Rs discussed yesterday. We could spend a lot of time judging the merits of this so-called open thing versus that so-called open thing. The point here is that we should look carefully at the things we call "open." When we recognize that our practices simultaneously include openness and closedness, we talk less about definitions and more about why we are doing what we're doing. As Gert Biesta likes to say, the ***for whom*** and ***for what*** **of openness.** This gets us more to the political and value-laden work of openness.

2) Overemphasis on access to content can homogenize learners and their contexts. This is perhaps the most common critique of open education, that it often focuses too much on content and delivery of content. If we believe that education is more than a delivery of content, then an exclusive focus on the content of open education and how accessible and affordable it is gives too much weight to instrumental goals of content creation and dissemination. In the dominant discourse about openness, open content and Open Educational Resources in particular embed values of access, standardization, and deinstitutionalization. Their "emphasis on replication" presumes the uniformity of learners (Knox, 2013a, p. 29).

Mike Caulfield talked about this in a fantastic blog post titled Simon's Watchmakers and the Future of Courseware. "Our architectures tend to emphasize stability (present usefulness) over the intermediate nature of such things." "As an example," he writes, "we often choose formats which privilege sharing (present usefulness) at the expense of remix (intermediacy).... In the quest to share things in "open" formats, providers had shared PowerPoints in PDF, a widely readable format that increased shareability at the expense of remix." I think the emphasis on content in the open education movement points to this desire for stability and present usefulness, and the apprehension about or deprioritization of openness that is not content and learners who are diverse (intermediacy)

Jen and I wrote in our paper: "It would raise the question of what, precisely, is transformed or transformative about OERs, and might prompt us to view them as aligned with unhelpful "politics of complexity reduction" (Gough, 2012, p. 47). As McArthur (2012) puts it, complexity reduction leads to "bad" rather than "virtuous" mess: "Seeking to force the inherently messy into a respectable tidy form can result in something that distorts, hides or falsifies the actual social world" (p. 421). Promises of simplicity—access, standardization, deinstitutionalization—come at a cost." To focus on the diversity of learners and away from

the instrumental goals of education would make openness and its goals more open to interpretation and to contestation.

3) **Open educational resources and practices may not attend sufficiently to issues of power and inclusion.**

There is a view that the main issue facing open education is how to separate content from elitist, expensive, restrictive, or exclusionary processes and make it more widely and freely available. How to make more free and open textbooks. How to publish in open access ways.

However, critiques of Open Education ask us to question whether our open practices "reproduce historically asymmetric power relations" (Olakulehin & Singh, 2013, p. 33) in the same way our so-called closed ones do. Amiel and Soares (2016) observe the need for advocates of openness to be vigilant: to avoid constantly replicating inequalities in terms of those who produce, develop skills and revenue, and actively participate in the commons, and those who are passive observers mostly assimilating the offerings that are made available (p. 1).

A study by Perryman and de los Arcos, for example, found that there were significant barriers for women in the global south to adopt, remix, or create open educational resources—i.e., to participate in the open education movement. They wrote: "Our analysis of female survey respondents in developed and developing countries shows significant differences in women's motivation to use OER and how they engage with OER, while **exposing technology as an acute dividing factor affecting OEP**and emphasizing the impact of OER in widening the range of teaching methods employed by educators in the Global South." In their conclusion, Perryman and de los Arcos point out that better access to technology and open resources would only slightly ameliorate the problems. They added: "More specifically, any increase in women's empowerment through openness (and ICT engagement more broadly) needs to follow, or parallel, the removal of other, micro-level, meso-level and macrolevel (Potnis, 2015) factors connected with gender inequality such as lack of financial autonomy, low levels of literacy, child marriage, early motherhood, gender-based violence, traditional seclusion practices, the favouring of boys in families' education investment, and the gendered division of household labour—all identified by UNESCO (2015, p.26) as amongst the 'structural barriers and entrenched discriminatory social norms' that impede women's empowerment.'"

The concern, too, is not just the power issues unaddressed in students' use of open educational resources, but also the power issues inherent in faculty labor and agency in the creation and/or reuse of open educational resources. Sheila MacNeill said: "There is a cost to open-ness…Some institutions have a lot of money to spend in adding formal, open spaces, in tending their flock and developing open as part of their mainstream priorities. They tend to have the capacity to subsume and develop open research initiatives. Some may be selling the proverbial family silver to keep up. Others, mine included, don't have that luxury and are looking at a strategic level to invest, maintain and grow different parts of their garden and the staff who maintain it."

In many cases, the privilege of creating OERs is often not afforded to people who work with under-resourced and under-represented students, which can lead to the creation of resources that do not address the needs of those students. Think about who the top MOOC providers were. They weren't community

colleges, who have a broad access mandate and who serve incredibly diverse populations. They were mostly elite institutions, with resources to create and push out branded content. Morris and Stommel (2014) argue that "openness can function as a form of resistance both within and outside the walls of institutions. But open education is no panacea. Hierarchies must be dismantled—and that dismantling made into part of the process of education—if its potentials are to be realized".

Where do these critiques leave us?

I referenced today's talk as critical, but generative lenses on open education. I believe these critical lenses afford the opportunity to explore really interesting possibilities.

In our paper, my colleague Jen Ross and I proposed that open educational theory and practice needs more attention to issues of **multiplicity, uncertainty, and transition**—the latter we frame in terms of 'boundary crossings' between openness and closedness. The concept of 'not-yetness', developed to respond to issues of oversimplification in digital education policy and practice, offers an approach to meeting this need. We were resisting the tendency to want to simplify and solve problems with technology. We believe that what makes the use of technology in education so potentially transformative are the ways in that it is not yet fully understood and not yet fully researched. These are characteristics we believe should be embraced.

In the same way, we think not-yetness is a lens that can help us to embrace the complexities of open education. And I agree with Rajiv that this is in large part about agency. It's when we try to simplify and tidy how openness and technology come into our educational environments that we remove teachers' and students' agency. Having students participate in open communities is messy. But that's also where students can really have agency. At Rajiv's suggestion yesterday, I read the excellent article that Miranda Dean wrote about her experiences with open pedagogy. It was a messy experience, was it not? She said this:

> "NOW I was getting it. I was linking the Biology to my personal life which was my inspiration and in doing this I found more links (a genetic link) that I continued to explore even further in my next post. It was all starting to come together. I was figuring out ways to upgrade my blog and add my portfolio to it. I spent more time making my blog look nicer. I was having conversations and connections with professionals on my blog and on twitter. It was all making sense. So what changed? My mentality and approach. Just one month ago I was afraid that I was going to fail a course for the first time in my life, and now I'm embracing this course with all of my effort. So what changed? I realized what kind of learner I really am."

Agency.

We believe that not-yetness can be a lens for thinking differently about open education, for including the following perspectives:

Multiplicity & emergence: If we take seriously the idea that all forms of openness entail forms of closedness, then we must recognize that there are many forms of openness; many ways to be open and closed. Not-yetness suggests we diversity and context are undervalued when we understand openness in limited ways.

As we create open resources and open practices, think of the many ways and contexts in which it might be used—open the possibility of multiplicity.

Noel Gough wrote: "complexity invites us to understand that many of the processes and activities that shape the worlds we inhabit are open, recursive, organic, nonlinear and emergent. It also invites us to be skeptical of mechanistic and reductionist explanations, which assume that these processes and activities are linear, deterministic and/or predictable and, therefore, that they can be controlled (at least in principle)."

Boundary crossing: Oliver (2015, pp. 8–9) noted that boundary crossing is expected in any social institution, including education, and "instead of trying to establish whether something is 'open or not, the focus should then be on the instances of boundary crossing that take place, and consequently the kinds of "openness" that characterise a system or institution." As Gloria Anzaldua's writings suggest, openness and closedness are in constant tension and in flux, and educators should explore and embrace the complexities that accompany modes of openness. Blurring of boundaries (e.g., between formal and informal learning) and the permeability between those boundaries

"Borders are set up to define the spaces that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them…A borderland is a vague undetermined place created by the residue of an unnatural boundary."

Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands / La Frontera

"Mexico/US Pacific Ocean border fence" by Tony Webster. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Commons.
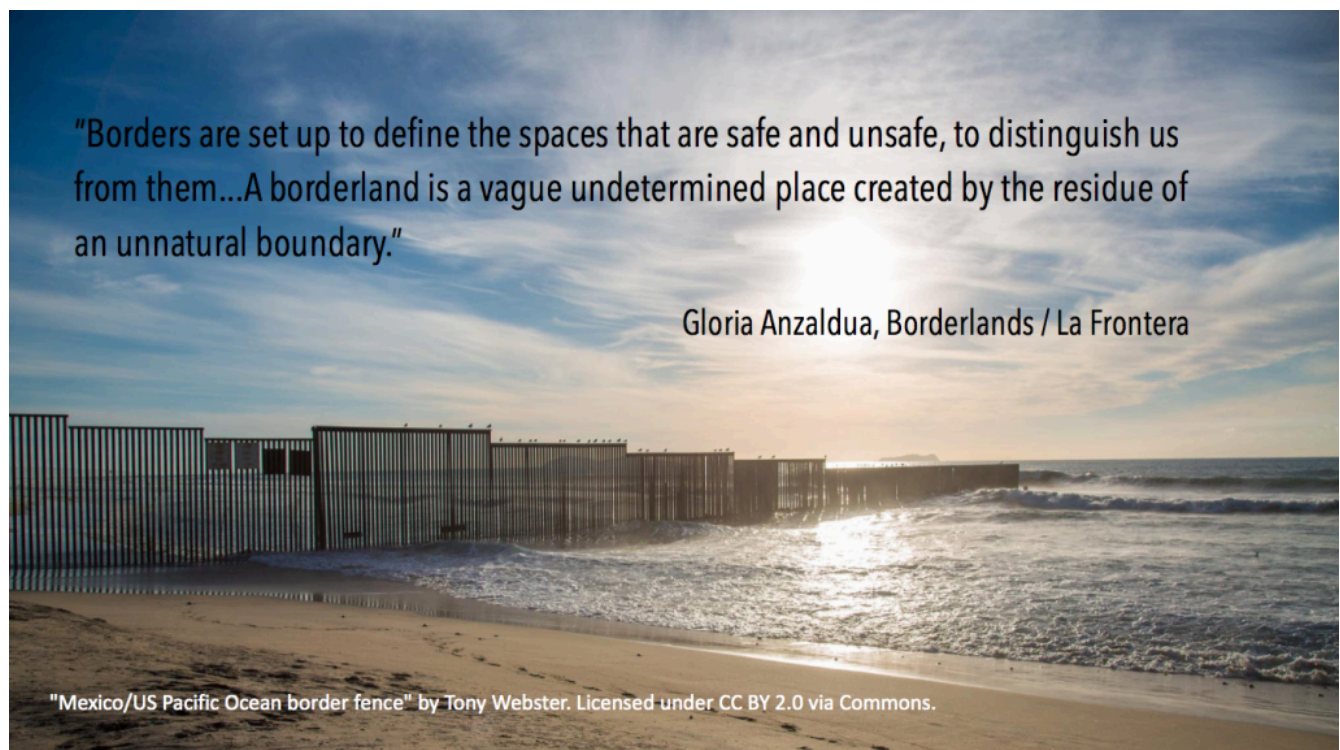
Uncertainty: Can we make more, not less, space for taking risks, for emergence and open-endedness? Can we create messiness around authority and authorship? Jen and I argue that:

"digital practices contribute to the fruitful mess that characterises education, casting new light on issues of power, responsibility, sustainability, reach and contact. …a key element of emerging technology is its not-yetness: there is so much we do not know when we engage with these technologies. **We must therefore choose to dwell as teachers in [a] state of radical and enduring uncertainty** …We need practices that

acknowledge and work with complexity to help us stay open to what may be genuinely surprising about what happens when online learning and teaching meets emerging technologies."

I want to share two examples, both from our paper, that we think show the possibilities for openness when we embrace multiplicity, boundary crossing, and uncertainty (you can read more about these examples in the paper). You may see that open-endedness, complexity, risk are pretty integral to these projects as well.

Students engaging agents "beyond the course": Student blogging is a form of openness that can allow for multiplicity, uncertainty, and boundary crossing. Again, I think the key here is agency. We want students to have the opportunities to experiment with identities, to set their own limits on the web, to own and make decisions about their data. Part of the process of developing pedagogies that involve openness is considering how environments and practices can support students to set such limits (which we might productively think of as 'closures'). At Middlebury, we have been helping students develop that agency by doing a domain of one's own project, called MiddCreate.

As part of MiddCreate, we have seen students exploring a multiplicity of voices (political, academic, professional), identities, and connections. It creates risk and uncertainty, inside and outside of classes and curriculum. But it is in the engaging with these uncertainties that we see some pretty amazing student creations.

Federated wiki, wikity: [From our paper:](#) "Caulfield proposes a federated wiki as a wiki infrastructure that upends collaboration-by-consensus by allowing an individual to maintain their own copy of a wiki page that they can edit and individually control (Caulfield, 2016b). Unlike traditional wikis, federated wiki pages resolve to multiple servers but remain connected so that individuals' copies stay linked to other copies. Federated wikis allow individuals to manage and control content while also freely sharing the content that they add and manage: a form of boundary crossing.

Beyond the affordances of federated wikis to allow individuals to intentionally navigate between openness and closedness, the use of federated wikis encourages teachers and learners to call into question how openness is shaped by the technologies we use. This, in turn, provokes useful questions about what we exchange for open collaboration and ask us, as teachers and technologists, to be transparent and critical about these choices, and sensitive to the risks and compromises they entail."

I know you have work to do today. I want to encourage you to explore the not-yetness of your open practices. I will offer these three questions as supports for such exploration.

1. What space is in these practices for distinctiveness, diversity, open-endedness?

2. How much uncertainty can this approach to openness accommodate?

3. What closures come along with these practices? What is in the borderlands?

Photo by Steinar Engeland, CC0 via Unsplash

When considering particular forms of openness as part of a pedagogical approach or strategy, educators might ask, perhaps along with their students:

1. What space is in these practices for distinctiveness, diversity, open-endedness?
2. How much uncertainty can this approach to openness accommodate?
3. What closures come along with these practices? What is in the borderlands?

In addressing questions around open-endedness, uncertainty, and boundary crossing, we can create more critical space for our open educational practices, and challenge some of the constraints occasioned by an overemphasis on the content of open education.

I want to end with a quote from Audrey Watters: "What are we going to do when we recognize that "open" is not enough. I hope, that we recognize that what we need is social justice. We need politics, not simply a license. We need politics, not simply technology solutions. We need an ethics of care, of justice, not simply assume that "open" does the work of those for us."

About the Author

Through her graduate studies in social sciences and 10+ years working in faculty development, Amy has been an advocate for learners and teachers across a variety of educational institutions, from community-based educational organizations to large public broad-access universities. Currently, Amy is the Associate Provost for Digital Learning at Middlebury College, where she oversees Middlebury's strategy for digital learning and runs an organization (Digital Learning & Inquiry, or DLINQ) that critiques, inquires into, and explores intersections of "the digital" with education.

Other works:

Ambitious futures for (digital) education: Perspectives from Tropicália

Platforms in education: A need for criticality and hope

Attribution

13.

RECLAIMING DISRUPTION

Karen Cangialosi

Originally published on June 30, 2017

Just after returning from Domains17, I started reading tweets from the New Media Consortium 2017 conference (which I didn't attend), then the transcript from Audrey Watters keynote. And the lurking ghost in my mind materialized with her words:

> *"No matter the predictions we make about disruption, in time everything in ed-tech becomes indistinguishable from the learning management system." AW*

Of course we want our DoOO project to succeed and for many students to engage. But the fear that the 'administration' or the college 'marketing and communications' office or whoever, will want to take this project from us and turn it into something else if we become too successful, too visible or too widespread has been haunting me from the beginning.
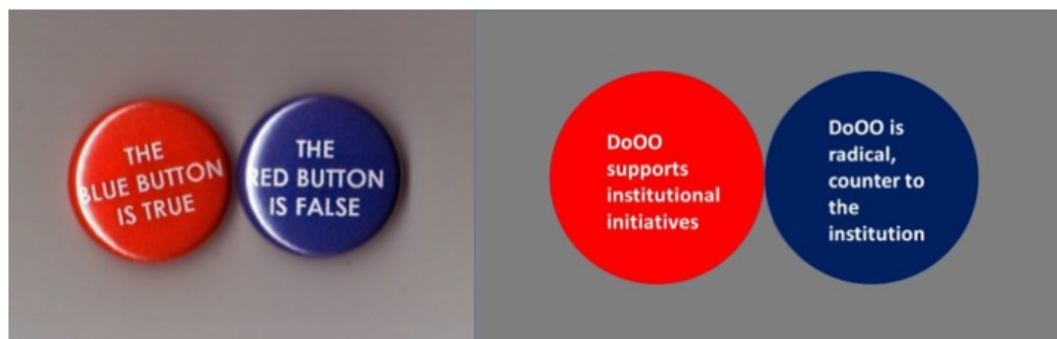
Image on left: CC BY 2.0 by Brett Jordan https://www.flickr.com/photos/x1brett/

This ghost has of course plagued others that have come before me. Martha Burtis, in her Domains17 keynote, 'Neither Locked Out, Nor In, asks: *"How do we free our students from the shackles of corporate and commercial Web spaces without creating some new kind of shackle?"* As someone who has been employed by an institution for a long time, but considers herself an activist, I am accustomed to working with One foot in, One foot out.

We become at least semi-comfortable with this quagmire, we use Trojan horse solutions. (Over the years, my co-conspirators and I have effectively wheeled in a lot of Trojan horses). But only those of us with privilege (like tenure) can even do that. Yet another paradox.

"We prefer to think of ourselves as professors or pedagogues or scholars or students, not as consumers or users." AW

But my worry about our DoOO project being co-opted by the dominant systems, the consumer-driven forces, feels especially frightening now, because more than ever before, Higher Ed IS A CONSUMER-DRIVEN BUSINESS. Even here, in spite of our designation as a "public" college. Or maybe especially here, BECAUSE of our small, poorly funded public college status with far fewer resources and high student debt (only 8% of our funding comes from the state). So we are fairly low in the higher education caste system (a la Bryan Alexander), and efficiency and productivity drive everything we do now.

And Silicon Valley ideology creeps in more and more every day.

"That is to say in my mind at least, Silicon Valley ideology – libertarian, individualist, consumerist, capitalist – seeks to mediate all relationships: social, professional, civic, familial." AW

The ideologies that we hope will shape our DoOO project, when we use words like inclusion, connection, community, agency, access, contribution could be undermined, transmuted into things that we did not intend. This keeps me up at night.

"New technologies, and the ideologies that underpin them, have brought the language of efficiency and productivity out of the workplace and into the classroom and into the home – into the realm of reproductive labor. Everything becomes a data-point to be tracked and quantified and analyzed and adjusted as (someone deems) necessary." AW

And especially kicks the bees in my bonnet (HT Tanya D E) about institutional 'assessment'. Because really it's about surveillance, isn't it? And we have "confused surveillance for care". I am haunted by the knowledge that Domains, Domains of our Own, or whatever we call this thing that we are doing, is/are not immune to being turned into an electronic portfolio system that can be 'assessed'. The distinction between assessment and surveillance seems really blurry to me.

I take Audrey Watters work (not just in this piece, but in all of her writing) as a call to action. If there are those of us that want a different educational narrative, a more compassionate ideology focused on actual care, and real 'transformation' based on voices that promote these ideas- instead of the now dominate, capitalistic, greed-based, corporate scheming that is currently underlying the 'ideologies that underpin our technologies'-then we need to be explicit in our work and our writing about this, we need to organize together to promote a different kind of messaging, we need to openly fight against this mechanistic and profit-based for the sake of profit mentality that is driving not just educational technology, not just education generally, not just (jeezuz!) parenting – but EVERYTHING that we do, that we believe in, that we believe is our reason for existing on the planet in the first place.

EVERY SINGLE WORD OF THIS. "Thinking Dangerously: The Role of #HigherEd in Authoritarian Times" by @HenryGiroux https://t.co/tviNDTo8bE

— Robin DeRosa (@actualham) June 28, 2017

YES. EVERY SINGLE WORD OF THIS. (Please go read the whole thing, there is so much more there than what I can include here and ALL of it is critical).

[Thinking Dangerously: The Role of Higher Education in Authoritarian Times by Henry Giroux](#)

This brilliant piece helps illuminate the links between education and real democracy that Audrey Watters is constantly talking about.

> *"At the core of thinking dangerously is the recognition that education is central to politics and that a democracy cannot survive without informed citizens. Critical and dangerous thinking is the precondition for nurturing the ethical imagination that enables engaged citizens to learn how to govern rather than be governed. Thinking with courage is fundamental to a notion of civic literacy that views knowledge as central to the pursuit of economic and political justice. Such thinking incorporates a set of values that enables a polity to deal critically with the use and effects of power, particularly through a developed sense of compassion for others and the planet. Thinking dangerously is the basis for a formative and educational culture of questioning that takes seriously how imagination is key to the practice of freedom. Thinking dangerously is not only the cornerstone of critical agency and engaged citizenship, it's also the foundation for a working democracy." HG*

We all need to become braver, more dangerous thinkers like Audrey Watters. And more so, we need to be willing to speak up, step up and take risks like she does. We need to teach so that our students learn how to think dangerously. I believe that Domain of One's Own projects need to be about this.

> *"Education is also vital to the creation of individuals capable of becoming critical social agents willing to struggle against injustices and develop the institutions that are crucial to the functioning of a substantive democracy. One way to begin such a project is to address the meaning and role of higher education (and education in general) as part of the broader struggle for freedom." HG*

YES. This is the conversation I believe we should be having. How do we address the meaning and role of higher education as a struggle for freedom? We have done an excellent job at pointing out the problems, but I believe we need to be more consciously and actively working on solutions. Higher Education is currently imploding in many ways. The time is now to redirect it, reshape it, make it become what most of us have always wanted it to be- A place for the *"creation of individuals capable of becoming critical social agents willing to struggle against injustices"*.

It's time to not just reclaim the web, but to Reclaim 'Disruption'. That word needs to be taken back, (the

way many of us reclaimed the word 'dyke' a long time ago). Give it teeth, make it have some power. Can DoOO be the pathway to truly transmogrifying higher education? Can it provide the culture chamber for "*an educational culture of questioning*"? Where students can be nurtured and allowed to "*deal critically with the use and effects of power,*

particularly through a developed sense of compassion for others and the planet"? THIS IS KEY.

Reclaiming Disruption means that we need to keep raising 'in your face' questions and work towards answering them.

Lora Taub in her [Reclaiming the Web](#) post asks:

> *"Where are the radical possibilities within higher ed? How can we connect Domains to those initiatives? To civic engagement? Global studies? LGBTQ initiatives? Teacher Ed? Departments with social justice missions? Initiatives like Intergroup Dialogue? Where are the spaces/partners working to advance social solidarities? And how can we propose Domains as an ally, an amplifier, to these efforts?" LT*

And just about everything that Jesse Stommel and Sean Michael Morris ever said. ("NO, you don't own your own domain if I grade it." JS for example)

And when we're thinking about WHO is doing this work, shaping our ideologies, we need to think about who ISN'T shaping our ideologies now, who hasn't been invited to the table, and why. We need to focus actively on making sure they get there. (One of the things that stuck in my mind from domains17 was the opening night gathering at the Retro Flashback pub. A fun place filled with arcade/video games that you could play as much as you want for free. Tanya and I tried a few games and then realized that we didn't really know the rules for any of them. Then Tanya, Sundi, Martha, me and some other women were chatting, we felt this familiar feeling, and then named it. This is a boys place; a white boys place. Yeah, some of us noticed.)

Reclaiming Disruption means that we need to disrupt the 'audit culture' of education. It means to prevent students from becoming trained pigeons.

> *"Audit cultures support conservative educational policies driven by market values and an unreflective immersion in the crude rationality of a data-obsessed market-driven society; as such, they are at odds with any viable notion of a democratically inspired education and critical pedagogy. In addition, viewing public and higher education as democratic public spheres necessitates rejecting the notion that they should be reduced to sites for training students for the workforce — a reductive vision now being imposed on public education by high-tech companies such as Facebook, Netflix and Google, which want to encourage what they call the entrepreneurial mission of education, which is code for collapsing education into training." HG*

Maybe Reclaiming Disruption means that our domains projects need to be a sort of civil disobedience of the web. Where we, as teachers, cultivate the compassion in our students but let go of all of the control, so they can disrupt our institutions and create pathways to freedom outside of them.

> *"Educators, students and others concerned about the fate of higher education need to mount a spirited attack against the managerial takeover of the university that began in the late 1970s with the emergence of a market-driven ideology…" HG*

What does Reclaiming Disruption mean to you?

About the Author

I am Professor of Biology and Open Education Faculty Fellow at Keene State College. I incorporate Open Pedagogy into my courses because of its great value in revolutionizing teaching and learning, and the ways in which it resonates very clearly with my passion for social justice. Because I believe that scientific investigation, like education, should be transparent, widely collaborative and designed to serve the public, I work on integrating the principles and practices of Open Science and Open Pedagogy. I am also a street activist who for many years, has marched, chanted and organized around diversity, equity and inclusion, especially women's and LGBT rights. My website: https://karencang.net/ My Twitter account: @karencang

Other works:

A Special Kind of Hell

But You Can't Do That in a STEM course!

Attribution

14.

PEDAGOGY AND THE LOGIC OF PLATFORMS

Chris Gilliard

Originally published on July 3, 2017

In 1974, computers were oppressive devices in far-off air-conditioned places. Now you can be oppressed by computers in your own living room.
   —Theodor Holm "Ted" Nelson, Computer Lib: Dream Machines (1987)

In his initial New Horizons column in *EDUCAUSE Review,* Mike Caulfield asked: "Can Higher Education Save the Web?"[1] I was intrigued by this question since I often say to my students that the web is broken and that the ideal thing to do (although quite unrealistic) would be to tear it down and start from scratch.

   I call the web "broken" because its primary architecture is based on what Harvard Business School Professor Shoshana Zuboff calls "surveillance capitalism," a "form of information capitalism [that] aims to predict and modify human behavior as a means to produce revenue and market control."[2] Web2.0—the web of platforms, personalization, clickbait, and filter bubbles—is the only web most students know. That web exists by extracting individuals' data through persistent surveillance, data mining, tracking, and browser fingerprinting[3] and then seeking new and "innovative" ways to monetize that data. As platforms and advertisers seek to perfect these strategies, colleges and universities rush to mimic those strategies in order to improve retention.[4]

   That said, I admit it might be useful to search for a more suitable term than "broken." The web is not broken in this regard: a web based on surveillance, personalization, and monetization works perfectly well for particular constituencies, but it doesn't work quite as well for persons of color, lower-income students, and people who have been walled off from information or opportunities because of the ways they are categorized according to opaque algorithms.

   My students and I frame the realities of the current web in the context of digital redlining, which provides the basis for understanding how and why the web works the way it does and for whom. The concept of digital redlining springs from an understanding of the historical policy of redlining: "The practice of denying or limiting financial services to certain neighborhoods based on racial or ethnic composition without regard to

the residents' qualifications or creditworthiness. The term 'redlining' refers to the practice of using a red line on a map to delineate the area where financial institutions would not invest."[5]

In the United States, redlining began informally but was institutionalized in the National Housing Act of 1934. At the behest of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) created maps for America's largest cities and color-coded the areas where loans would be differentially available. The difference among these areas was race.

Digital redlining is the modern equivalent of this historical form of societal division; it is the creation and maintenance of technological policies, practices, pedagogy, and investment decisions that enforce class boundaries and discriminate against specific groups. The *digital divide* is a noun; it is the consequence of many forces. In contrast, *digital redlining* is a verb, the "doing" of difference, a "doing" whose consequences reinforce existing class structures. In one era, redlining created differences in physical access to schools, libraries, and home ownership. In my classes, we work to recognize how digital redlining is integrated into technologies, and especially education technologies, and is producing similar kinds of discriminatory results.

We might think about digital redlining as the process by which different schools get differential journal access. If one of the problems of the web as we know it now is access to quality information, digital redlining is the process by which so much of that quality information is locked by paywalls that prevent students (and learners of all kinds) from accessing that information. We might think about digital redlining as the level of surveillance (in the form of analytics that predict grades or programs that suggest majors to students). We also might think about digital redlining to the degree that students who perform Google searches get certain information based on the type of machine they are using or get served ads for high-interest loans based on their digital profile (a practice Google now bans). It's essential to note that the personalized nature of the web often dictates what kind of information students get both inside and outside the classroom. A Data & Society Research Institute study makes this clear: "In an age of smartphones and social media, young people don't follow the news as much as it follows them. News consumption is often a byproduct of spending time on social media platforms. When it comes to getting news content, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and native apps like the Apple news app are currently the most common places where the teens and young adults in our focus groups encounter news."[6]

Students are often surprised (and even angered) to learn the degree to which they are digitally redlined, surveilled, and profiled on the web and to find out that educational systems are looking to replicate many of those worst practices in the name of "efficiency," "engagement," or "improved outcomes." Students don't know any other web—or, for that matter, have any notion of a web that would be different from the one we have now. Many teachers have at least heard about a web that didn't spy on users, a web that was (theoretically at least) about connecting not through platforms but through interfaces where individuals had a significant amount of choice in saying how the web looked and what was shared. A big part of the teaching that I do is to tell students: "It's not supposed to be like this" or "It doesn't have to be like this." The web is fraught with recommender engines and analytics. Colleges and universities buy information on prospective students, and institutions profile students through social media accounts.[7] Prospective employers do the same.

When students find out about microtargeting, social media "filter bubbles," surveillance capitalism, facial recognition, and black-box algorithms making decisions about their future—and learn that because so much targeting is based on economics and race, it will disproportionately affect them—their concept of what the web is changes.

Another aspect of my teaching is rethinking the notion of "consent." It's important to ask: What would the web look like if surveillance capitalism, information asymmetry, and digital redlining were not at the root of most of what students do online? We don't know the answer. But if higher education is to "save the web," we need to let students envision that something else is possible, and we need to enact those practices in classrooms. To do that, we need to understand "consent" to mean more than "click here if you agree to these terms."

I often wonder if it's possible to have this discussion without engaging in a deep and ahistorical practice of nostalgia. Telling students about the "good old days" of hand coding and dial-up internet access probably isn't the best way to spend classroom time. However, when we use the web now, when we use it with students, and when we ask students to engage online, we must always ask: What are we signing them up for? (Ultimately, we must get them to ask that question themselves and take it with them.) Here the term "consent," often overused and misunderstood, needs to be foregrounded in the idea that we must do all we can to explore the reality that students are entering into an asymmetrical relationship with platforms.

While we can do our best to inform students, the black box nature of the web means that we can never definitively say to them: "This is what you are going to be a part of." The fact that the web functions the way it does is illustrative of the tremendously powerful economic forces that structure it. Technology platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and education technologies (e.g., the learning management system) exist to capture and monetize data. Using higher education to "save the web" means leveraging the classroom to make visible the effects of surveillance capitalism. It means more clearly defining and empowering the notion of consent. Most of all, it means envisioning, with students, new ways to exist online.

Notes

1. Michael Caulfield, "Can Higher Education Save the Web?," *EDUCAUSE Review* 52, no. 1 (January/February 2017).
2. Shoshana Zuboff, "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization," *Journal of Information Technology* 30, no. 1 (March 2015), 75.
3. Dan Goodin, "Now Sites Can Fingerprint You Online Even When You Use Multiple Browsers," *Ars Technica*, February 13, 2017.
4. Sarah Brown, "Where Every Student Is a Potential Data Point," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* April 9, 2017.
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6. Mary Madden, Amanda Lenhart, and Claire Fontaine, *How Youth Navigate the News Landscape*, Data

& Society Recent Qualitative Research (Miami: John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, 2017), 20.

7. Natasha Singer, "They Loved Your G.P.A. Then They Saw Your Tweets," *New York Times,* November 9, 2013.

About the Author

Dr. Chris Gilliard is a writer, professor and speaker. His scholarship concentrates on digital privacy, and the intersections of race, class, and technology. He is an advocate for critical and equity-focused approaches to tech in education. His work has been featured in The Chronicle of Higher Ed, EDUCAUSE Review, Fast Company, Vice, and Real Life Magazine.

Other works:

Friction-Free Racism

Caught in the Spotlight

Attribution

15.

QUEERING OPEN PEDAGOGY

Jesse Stommel

A SlideShare element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=194

On July 30, 2017, Jesse Stommel offered the closing keynote for the Digital Pedagogy Lab Vancouver event. Watch the video here:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=194

Transcript of slides:

1. Queering Open Pedagogy
2. The 2017 OpenEd conference recently announced a keynote from the Global Education Initiative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
3. A few clicks away from information about the Global Education Initiative on LDS.org are words (which I will not quote) that suggest LGBTQ people are subhuman, and that, while they encourage compassion, the church's doctrine (this part I will quote) "will not change."
4. The community response to the OpenEd announcement was swift, and the keynote was changed. But the conversation that arose in the wake of the announcement continues.
5. Academia can be deeply hostile to gay, queer, and trans people. And I'm continually unsettled by how infrequently this gets acknowledged.
6. Sadly, far too many academic projects, events, and publications driven by LGBTQ people or issues are marginalized as niche or too political.
7. What I see as most essential is a willingness to be human with humans, talk things out, and learn every second.

8. I'm also unwilling to quote from Donald Trump's recent (and vile) tweets proclaiming a ban on transgender soldiers in the U.S. military. We shouldn't help his bigotry by amplifying it. Retweeting abuse is abuse. Headlines quoting abuse are abuse. We need to talk about this, but must be careful not to do more harm as we do.

9. Trump's tweets have been called a "distraction" and yet a recent Nation article (https://www.thenation.com/article/ donald-trumps-ban-on-transgender-troops-is-not-a-distraction/) points out why it can be deeply problematic to call his tweets about the transgender ban a "distraction." Richard Kim writes, "Being at once anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and anti-LGBT is not a diversion from some secret Trump/Republican agenda; neither is pitting us against each other. It's what they do. It's who they are."

10. For many LGBTQ folks, the fear of being shot, beaten up, screamed at, is a constant nagging dread. Just being ourselves puts us at risk.

11. On June 12, 2016, at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL, 49 people were killed and 58 wounded. It was the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. Shortly after, a piece was published in the Washington Post called, "How to talk to a queer person who is afraid of dying."

12. Carlos Maza writes, "If you have queer people you care about in your life, talk to them. Always, but especially now. Maybe they seem fine ... Ask them how they're doing. Tell them you love them. Tell them your love doesn't come with caveats. Tell them it's okay to cry. Tell them they don't deserve to be scared. Tell them that it's okay to be scared anyway. Tell them it's okay to be afraid of dying. Tell them that they matter to you — and that you want them here, alive, now. None of that will stop an LGBT person from being afraid of dying."

13. In February, The Trump administration and Betsy DeVos rescinded President Obama's 2016 "Dear Colleague" letter that recommended specific protections for transgender students in U.S. public schools. The letter specifically outlined the responsibility schools have "to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students."

14. Increasingly, I think the work of education is activism not teaching.

15. My queer lit. course was once singled out by a national conservative group as a "dishonorable mention" in their list of "America's Most Bizarre and Politically Correct College Courses."

16. A sound, a whole sound is not separation, a whole sound is in an order. Suppose there is a pigeon, suppose there is. Looseness, why is there a shadow in a kitchen, there is a shadow in a kitchen because every little thing is bigger. The time when there are four choices and there are four choices in a difference, the time when there are four choices there is a kind and there is a kind. There is a kind. There is a kind. Supposing there is a bone, there is a bone. Supposing there are bones. There are bones. When there are bones there is no supposing there are bones. There are bones and there is that consuming. The kindly way to feel separating is to have a space between. This shows a likeness. ~ Gertrude Stein, Tender Buttons

17. In the Introduction to Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks writes, "any radical pedagogy must insist that

everyone's presence is acknowledged" (8).

18. "As a high-school teacher, I kept quiet about my sexuality because I didn't want to draw attention to it. Instead, I created a deafening silence, a vacuum that tugged on everything around it and demanded attention by its absence." ~ Christopher R. Friend, "Finding My Voice as a Minority Teacher"

19. Critical Pedagogy asks us to rethink our approach to the classroom in fundamental ways, but it can also start in smaller gestures, the choices we make when assembling a reading list, the language we use in our syllabi when we present it, our first words in a classroom.

20. Danielle Paradis writes in "The Pleasures, the Perils, and the Pursuit of Pedagogical Intimacy," "I'm speaking at the very edge of what I'm trying to say. Learning is uncomfortable, and the trouble with letting someone teach you is that it leaves a mark — an impression."

21. In 2014, I co-authored an abstract for that year's OpenEd conference with Danielle. The title of our proposal was "Queering Open," and in it, we write, "Our work responds to the frustrated conversation about the meaning of Open by altogether challenging the impulse to neatly contain Open."

22. Danielle and I continue, "To queer Open is to imagine it as an emergent space always in process."

23. And, "From this vantage, Open Education is not confined by courses, platforms, syllabi, hierarchies, but exactly resists those containers, imagining a space for marginalized representation — a space that troubles distinctions between student / teacher and formal / informal learning — a space that recognizes our unique embodied contexts and offers opportunities for liberation from them."

24. Our proposal was rejected.

25. "It does not seem possible to think of oneself as normal without thinking that some other kind of person is pathological." ~ Michael Werner, The Trouble with Normal

26. For me, "queer" is more useful as a verb than as a noun. Nouns are often fixed and immutable, whereas verbs imply movement and action. It makes less sense to think about what "queer" *is* and more sense to think about what "queer" does.

27. "A word so fraught as 'queer' is—fraught with so many social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement—never can only denote; nor even can it only connote" (9). ~ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "What's Queer?"

28. "The story of identity in a learning space can't be told by one person, or even seven people, but only by a cacophony of voices, a gathering together — of sounds, of ideas, of pedagogical intentions." ~ Sean Michael Morris and Jesse Stommel, "CFP: Pedagogical Alterity: Stories of Race, Gender, Disability, Sexuality"

29. bell hooks means something very specific when she talks of Radical Openness, and so far the Open Education movement has failed to tread that particular water.

30. In Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks writes, "for me this place of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a 'safe' place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance." For hooks, the risks we take are personal, professional, political. When she says that "radical openness is a margin," she suggests it is a place of uncertainty, a

place of friction, a place of critical thinking. This is not an Open pedagogy neatly defined and delimited.

31. Radical openness isn't a bureaucratic gesture. It has to be rooted in a willingness to sit with discomfort.

32. What if dialogue were the stuff of open pedagogy and not content? Radical openness means asking hard questions and having hard questions asked always of us.

33. Teaching is always a risk. Learning is always a risk. But that risk is not distributed evenly. A gay male administrator experiences the classroom differently from a black teacher, a disabled staff member, or a female student.

34. "We act—at our peril—as if 'open' is politically neutral, let alone politically good or progressive. Indeed, we sometimes use the word to stand in place of a politics of participatory democracy." When we use a word like "open," or ones like "agency" and "identity," these should not be just empty signifiers. We should be transparent, and even partisan, in our politics. Especially as educators. ~ Audrey Watters, "From 'Open' to Justice,

35. "Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine." ~ Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

About the Author

Jesse Stommel is Executive Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning Technologies at University of Mary Washington. He is co-founder of Digital Pedagogy Lab and Hybrid Pedagogy: an open-access journal of learning, teaching, and technology. He has a PhD from University of Colorado Boulder. He is co-author of An Urgency of Teachers: the Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy.

Jesse is a documentary filmmaker and teaches courses about pedagogy, film, and new media. Jesse experiments relentlessly with learning interfaces, both digital and analog, and his research focuses on higher education pedagogy, critical digital pedagogy, and assessment. He's got a rascal pup, Emily, two clever cats, Loki and Odin, and a badass daughter, Hazel. He's online at jessestommel.com and on Twitter @Jessifer.

Attribution

16.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MATTHEW MOORE, THE OPEN ANTHOLOGY OF EARLIER AMERICAN LITERATURE, 2ND EDITION

Matthew Moore

I was among the students who worked on professor Tim Robbins' classroom project at Graceland University to expand *The Open Anthology of Earlier American Literature*. Enrolled in Tim's Early American Literature course last fall, he introduced an assignment that would entail us contributing and expanding an open anthology of literature. Most of us must have pondered: "open anthology"? I know I did. Divided into groups, each of us took on various roles from writing introductions for literary works to researching biographical information to provide brief historical context. Although initially daunting, I don't think I speak only for myself when I say that as a class this assignment offered rewards and payoffs both intellectually and communally; plus, it was just plain fun. My group in particular chose the works of Roger Williams to curate, write introductions to, and research Williams' historical impact. Here, I quickly realized the importance of such an anthology. Williams' work fought in defense of indigenous people's rights in North America. Neither I nor the rest of my group had encountered his works or narratives in high school classes.

It became clear that this was more than just some group project reinforcing the value of collaboration or how to conduct proper research; the open source anthology plugged a handful of university undergraduates into a larger, reciprocal community between peers and instructors. Ultimately, however, that line began to blur. The autonomy and authority fostered in the students, and the fact that this project actively sought and utilized student perspectives, was empowering. Engaged with this digital pedagogy, given backstage passes to the world of academic anthologies, we curated works that seemed urgent for a new generation of students. In this way, it was our own critique of the traditional and reiterated canon that has been burnt into the retinas of undergrad English majors anywhere. Within that space we included untold histories, suppressed narratives, and stories that didn't make the cut. In a small yet surprisingly diverse university with students from all different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and who encounter literature in their own nuanced ways, the inclusion of these pieces

was vital. It was less a matter of reprinting a time-honored magnum opus as it was a cultural responsibility to validate the works of quelled voices.

We also, indirectly, became acquainted with the bureaucratic side of anthologizing: working within open domain and the restrictions of copyright, which lent insight into the inner workings of the literary industry.

It dawned on me: in the larger picture, and with each contribution, we were opening access to academic material to a global community; possibly even to some without access to higher education. In that sense, we felt as if our positions of academic privilege, in this case, were used in a productive and egalitarian way, even if it may have been a small feat. Knowing that our contributions to the open source anthology would be read, understood, and interpreted by future readers from all avenues of life is a mesmerizing thought.

Having been led to believe in the authoritative role of the textbook, its glorified place in academia, this project turned that notion on its head and, instead, cultivated a community of student-to-student communication that was far more productive and valuable to some of us than purchasing a $150 textbook. From the university student who can't afford the textbook, let alone grip the thing, to the literary nerd aimlessly scouring the recesses of the Internet in search of a literary text, the benefits of being open are many. With an anthology for students written by students, we break away from a precedent of reading these works in esoteric circles, and open new, inclusive frontiers of engaging with a text and, more important, having access to it.

About the Author

Matthew Moore is a writer, artist, and worker currently residing in rural Missouri.

Attribution

17.

OPEN EDUCATION, OPEN QUESTIONS

Catherine Cronin

Originally published on October 23, 2017

This article was adapted from my [keynote presentation](#) at the 2016 Open Educational Resources Conference [OER16: Open Culture](#) at the University of Edinburgh and from the [related post](#) on my blog, [catherinecronin.net](#).
The use of open practices by learners and educators is complex, personal, and contextual; it is also continually negotiated. Higher education institutions require collaborative and critical approaches to openness in order to support faculty, students, and learning in an increasingly complex higher education environment.

Credit: **Image by** [Alan Levine](#). [CC BY 2.0](#)

Whether we consider ourselves to be open education practitioners or researchers, advocates or critics, wonderers or agnostics, our motivating questions regarding openness are likely to be different, often very

different. For example: How can we minimize the cost of textbooks? How can we help students to build, own, and manage their digital content? How might we support and empower learners in making informed choices about their digital identities and digital engagement? How might we build knowledge as a collective endeavor? And, how can we broaden access to education, particularly in ways that do not reinforce existing inequalities? Open educational practices can help us in achieving these aims. However, engaging with the complexity and contextuality of openness is vitally important if we wish to be keepers not only of openness but also of hope, equality, and justice.[1]

At present, open practices sit somewhat uneasily and unevenly within higher education. As Bonnie Stewart notes: "The word 'open' signals a broad, de-centralized constellation of practices that skirt the institutional structures and roles by which formal learning has been organized for generations."[2] Teaching and pedagogical interactions typically occur in higher education in one or more of the spaces illustrated in figure 1: physical spaces; bounded online spaces; and open online spaces. This is a simplification, of course, but useful for the purpose of comparison. There are good reasons for teaching and learning to occur in each of these spaces, depending on our particular aims and context. However, if we limit ourselves to the first two spaces, it is difficult to share our learning with wider networks and difficult to invite our networks to participate in the dynamic learning spaces we create. This is not simply a matter of, say, choosing to use Facebook simply because "that's where our students are" (which is not a valid assumption in any case). It's about recognizing the ubiquity of knowledge across networks, the importance of developing *network* as well as *digital* literacies, and the imperative of facilitating learning that fosters agency, empowerment, and civic participation.
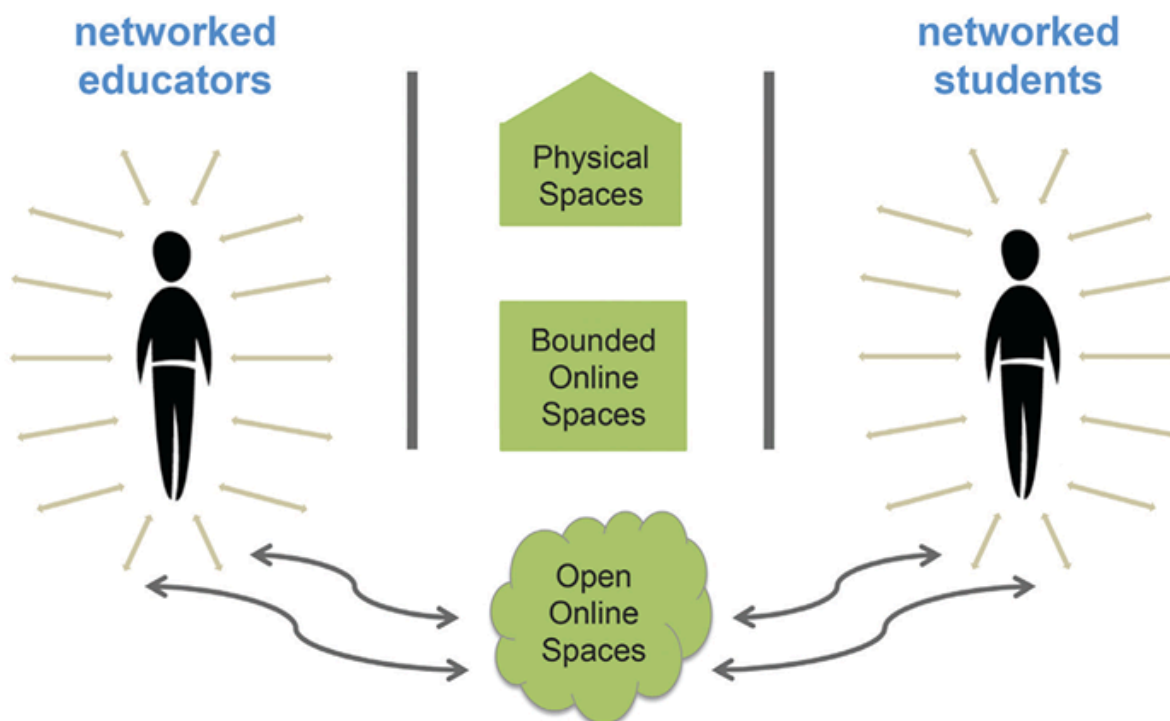

Figure 1. A Model for Networked Education (*Credit:* Image by [Catherine Cronin](#), building on "[The](#)

Networked Teacher" by Alec Couros. CC BY-SA)

The Open Education Consortium defines *open education* as "resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide."[3] Beyond this overarching definition, however, openness is a complex phenomenon, with economic, political, technical, and social aspects. The qualifier "open" is variously used to describe resources (the artefacts themselves as well as access to and usage of them), individual learning and teaching practices, institutional practices and policies, the use of educational technologies, and the values underlying educational endeavours.

So how do we grasp openness? A first step is to be clear about our own aims and interpretations. I've often used a simple typology of interpretations of openness (see figure 2) to contextualize and compare others' work and to communicate my own. The first interpretation of openness in education is *open admission*, where the qualifier "open" refers to open-door academic policies, such as those of The Open University in the United Kingdom and dozens of open universities globally. A second interpretation is open as *free*. Using this interpretation, a vast array of online resources and courses would be considered open: YouTube videos, podcasts, TED Talks, and MOOCs, for example. Free resources are not unfettered, however. They can be accessed only by those with the requisite skills, device(s), and Internet connection. Users are often required to register in order to access free resources, providing personal information such as a name and e-mail address. In such cases, even though the resources are free, they have an *opportunity cost* to the user in the form of personal data and usage data.[4] In addition, the use of free online resources is subject to copyright restrictions unless the creators provide explicit permission for reuse of the original works. Many open education advocates and researchers thus consider the "open as free" interpretation to be limited.
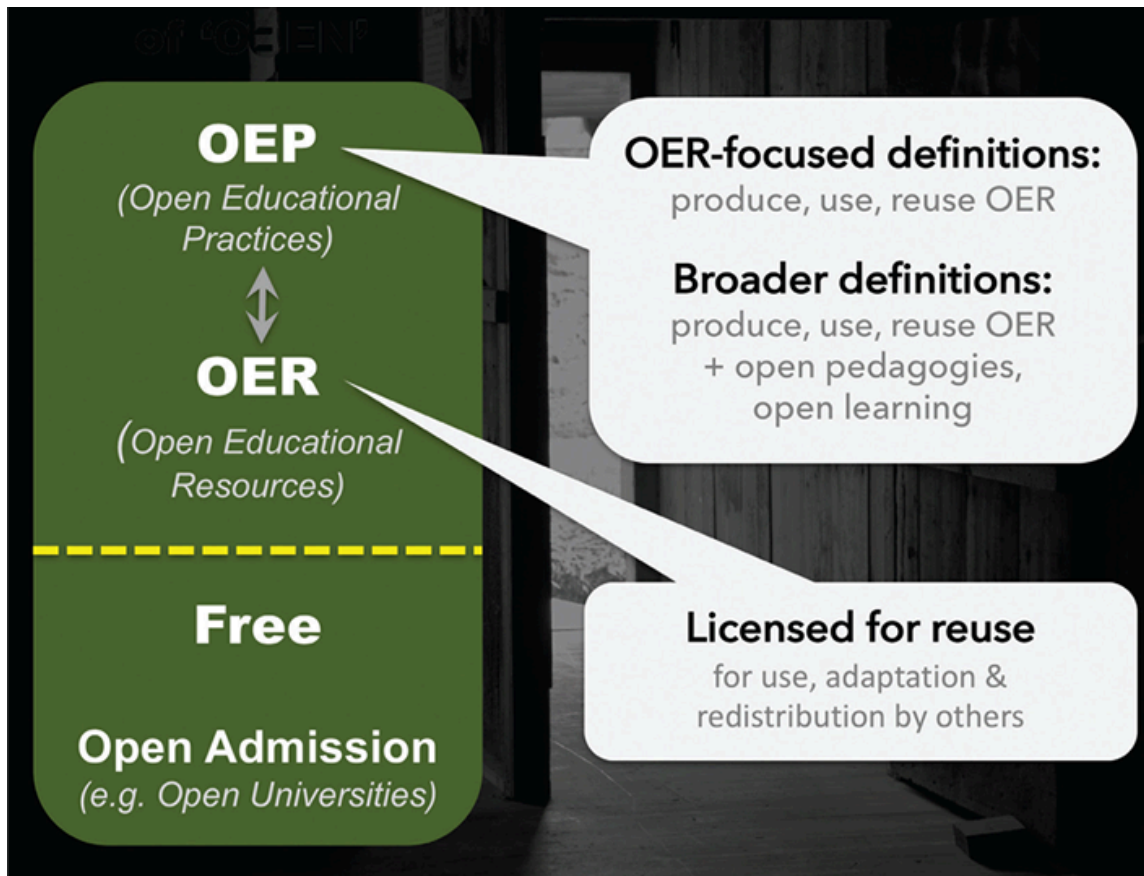
Figure 2. Interpretations of "Open" (*Credit:* Image by [Catherine Cronin](). [CC BY-SA]())

Two further interpretations of "open" are OER (Open Educational Resources) and OEP (Open Educational Practices). OER are resources whose creators have expressly enabled reuse through the use of open licenses. OER embody the notion of knowledge as a public good: take it, use it, remix it, and share as you wish. OEP move the focus beyond content. OEP are "practices which support the (re)use and production of OER through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning paths."[5] The most expansive definitions of OEP focus on OER, open pedagogy, and open learning, as well as power relations and inequality.[6]

The deceptively simple term *open* hides a great deal of complexity, much of which depends on the particular context within which open practice is considered. Thus it is imperative to move beyond open-versus-closed dichotomies and even beyond unified conceptions of openness. Openness requires a critical approach.

We must be aware of the potential for openness to do the opposite of what we intend and to create or exacerbate inequalities. Students and faculty who are already marginalized, structurally or otherwise, can feel pressured to take on open scholarship and may be disadvantaged by it — exposing themselves to online abuse, for example. As Richard Edwards writes: "Openness is not the opposite of closed-ness, nor is there simply a continuum between the two. . . . An important question therefore becomes not simply whether education is more or less open, but what forms of openness are worthwhile and for whom; openness alone is not an educational virtue."[7] Openness entails negotiating new forms of risk. sava singh, for example, highlights the

privilege of many open educators: "The people calling for open are often in positions of privilege, or have reaped the benefits of being open early on — when the platform wasn't as easily used for abuse, and when we were privileged to create the kinds of networks that included others like us."[8] We may feel comfortable in the networks we have created, and enthused about inviting peers and students, but open practice is always personal. Individual determinations regarding openness often entail a succession of considered and nuanced decisions within specific contexts. Recognition of the complexities and risks of openness, as well as its potential benefits, should inform open education practice and policy. A critical and reflexive approach is essential.

In my own research, I have explored meaning-making and decision-making by college and university educators regarding whether, why, and how they use OEP in their teaching.[9] Among the educators I interviewed (across a continuum of "closed" to open practice), the issue of most concern was balancing privacy and openness — which was overwhelmingly described as both an individual decision and an ongoing challenge. In the words of one academic: "You're negotiating all the time." Through this research, as well as ongoing work with faculty and students, I've found that individuals seek to balance privacy and openness in their use of social and participatory technologies at four levels (see figure 3): *macro* (global level), *meso* (community/network level), *micro* (individual level), and *nano* (interaction level).

MACRO will I share openly?

MESO whom will I share **with**? *(context collapse)*

MICRO who will I share **as**? *(digital identity)*

NANO will I share **this**?
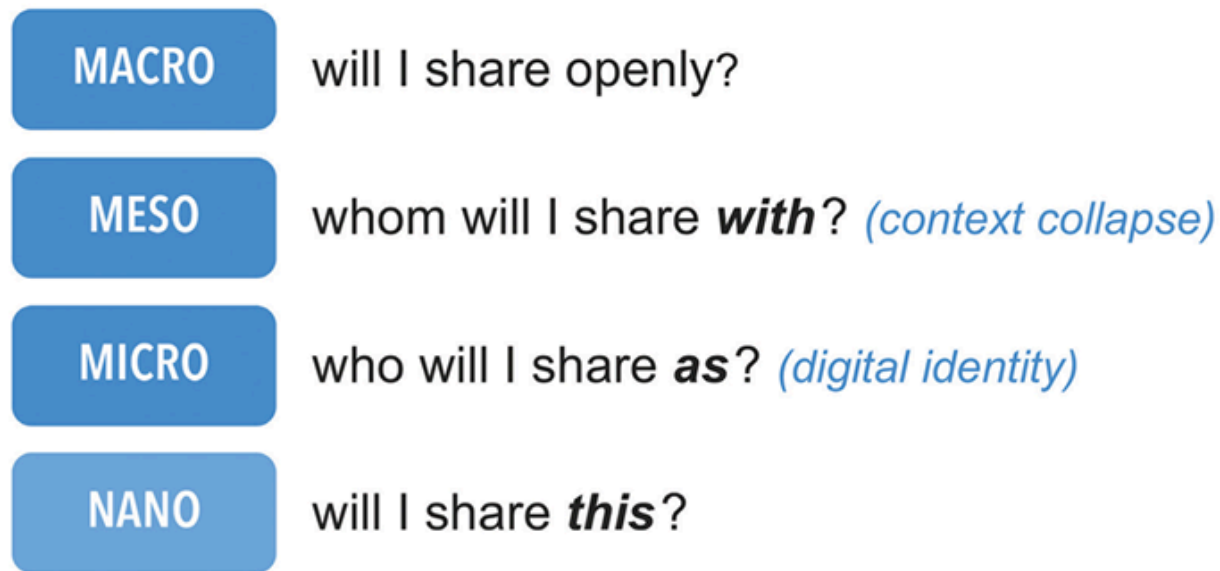
Figure 3. Balancing Privacy and Openness (*Credit:* Image by Catherine Cronin. CC BY-SA)

Considering these different levels has proved helpful to me in understanding the personal and complex negotiations involved in open practice. At the *macro* level, individuals make decisions about whether or not to engage in open networking and sharing, for example via Twitter or blogging. Some individuals opt out at this level. Those who engage further in open practice must consider questions at three additional levels. At the *meso* level, individuals consider whom they would like to share *with* (e.g., family, friends, faculty, students, interest groups, the wider public), as well as those with whom they do not want to share. At the *micro* level,

individuals make decisions about their digital identities — that is, who they will share *as*. And at the *nano* level, individuals make decisions about individual open transactions: "Will I like, follow, friend, post, tweet, tag, or share *this*?" Think, for example, of those moments when you've hovered over your keyboard or phone before pressing "Send." As one academic in my research study put it: "It's a lot of work for one tweet." Formal and informal professional development initiatives often focus at the top or macro level, describing the benefits of sharing and supporting staff in learning how to use various tools. But the complex and ongoing work of open practice happens beneath this level — at the meso, micro, and nano levels — where issues around context collapse and digital identity are negotiated.

In summary, openness does not involve a one-time decision, and it is not universally experienced. It is always complex, personal, contextual, and continually negotiated. Attention must be paid to the actual experiences and concerns of students and faculty. Critical approaches are essential. I believe we must support faculty and students by working broadly and collaboratively in three key areas: developing digital literacies and digital capabilities;[10] specifically supporting individuals in navigating tensions between privacy and openness; and, most critically, reflecting on the role of higher education and the roles of and relationships between educators and students in an increasingly open and networked society.

Notes

1. The idea of being the "keepers of justice" is inspired by Tressie McMillan Cottom, "The Access Paradox: Can Education Expansion Balance Access with Equality?," Keynote, International Conference on Open and Distance Education, University of South Africa, October 14, 2015, and Paul Prinsloo, "Making Sense of Access: Access to What? At What Cost? For Whom?," *Open Distance Teaching and Learning,* October 26, 2015.

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About the Author

Catherine Cronin is Strategic Education Developer at Ireland's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Catherine brings many years' experience as an open educator, open researcher, community educator and activist to her work in higher education. Her work focuses on digital and open education, critical approaches to openness, critical digital literacies and digital identity practices. Her recent PhD explored the benefits, risks and tensions of using open educational practices (OEP) in higher education. A born New Yorker who has made her home in Ireland, you can find Catherine online at @catherinecronin.

Other works:

Open education, walking a critical path

Framing open educational practices from a social justice perspective

Attribution

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN OPEN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Tara Robertson

Originally published on November 12, 2017

It was such an honor to be invited to speak on a [panel](#) at OpenCon with [Denisse Albornoz](#), [Thomas Mboa](#), and [Siko Bouterse](#). [Lorraine Chuen](#)did an amazing job putting the panel together and moderating. Lorraine's questions were:

- How do the solutions put forth by the Open movements reinforce Western dominance, colonialism, as well as barriers on the basis of race, class, gender, ability, etc…?
- How does exclusion and a lack of diversity impact their own Open advocacy work in their communities and/or institutions?
- How might they begin to address this in their own communities?

This panel starts at 7h47m and [here's the group notes](#).

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=73

Here's my slides and speaking notes.

Hello, my name is Tara Robertson. I am from Vancouver, Canada which is the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations. Unceded means that the land was never sold, given, or released to any colonial government. In Canada we're thinking a lot about relationships between settlers and First Nations in many areas of society, including education.

I am mixed race and queer, which means I've had a lot of life experiences where I don't fit. Often being a misfit means that I've had a first hand personal view of power and group dynamics.

This month I changed careers and am part of the Diversity and Inclusion team at Mozilla, the organization that fights to keep the internet healthy, open, and accessible to all. Firefox Quantum launches on Tuesday, and if you're not already using it as your web browser, you really should.

Image credit: https://flic.kr/p/D1KCFw

In most social situations, I think it's always interesting to observe:

- Who is in the room?
- Who is at the table?
- Who speaks a lot?
- Who has social capital?
- Who feels welcome?
- Whose ideas are respected and centered by default?

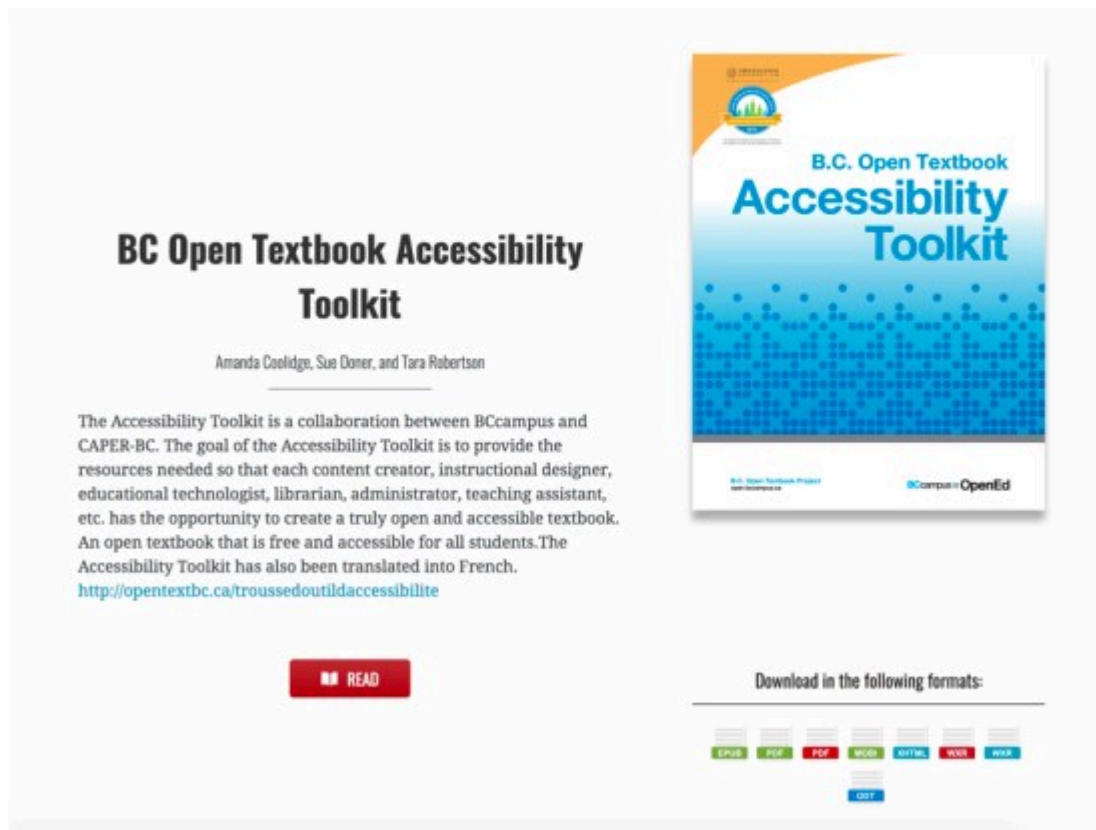I think even more interesting is to note:

- Who is missing?
- Who isn't even in the room?
- Who doesn't have a seat at the table?
- Who is sitting on the margins?
- Who doesn't feel welcome?
- Who has to fight to have their viewpoints respected?

I think this simple question is useful to keep in mind as we move into the do-a-thon tomorrow.

I'm going to share 2 short examples with you to illustrate this point.

HTTP://OPENTEXTBC.CA/ACCESSIBILITYTOOLKIT/

BC Open Textbook Accessibility Toolkit

Amanda Coolidge, Sue Doner, and Tara Robertson

The Accessibility Toolkit is a collaboration between BCcampus and CAPER-BC. The goal of the Accessibility Toolkit is to provide the resources needed so that each content creator, instructional designer, educational technologist, librarian, administrator, teaching assistant, etc. has the opportunity to create a truly open and accessible textbook. An open textbook that is free and accessible for all students. The Accessibility Toolkit has also been translated into French.
http://opentextbc.ca/troussedoutildaccessibilite

The first example I want to talk about is how I got involved in open textbooks.

For the last 5 years I was the Accessibility Librarian for an organization that serves students with print disabilities at 20 colleges and universities. We digitized their print textbooks and learning materials into digital and accessible versions. In Canada, students with disabilities can register with their Disability Service Office at their university. Students need to provide medical documentation or a psycho-educational assessment. Then they meet with a disability counselor who looks at the documentation, the academic program objectives and the course syllabus and then figures out what barriers exist and what the necessary accommodations are. All of this takes time, and often students with print disabilities don't have access to the course materials until a couple of weeks after their classmates.

When I heard about the British Columbia open textbook project I saw an opportunity for us to move from remediating things that were broken to inserting ourselves at the beginning of the publishing workflow to make things that were accessible to everyone from the start.

As part of this process we worked with BCcampus and a group of students with print disabilities to test some of the first open textbooks that had been produced in British Columbia. Working with a group of students who were visually impaired or blind highlighted some access issues that we weren't aware of.

Including students with visual impairments also made us think about how we worked and we learned some

unexpected things. For example, when we were co-presenting at a conference I learned a lot about the lack of accessible signage in our light rail stations and the extra prep work that blind and visually impaired people need to do to travel somewhere new.

By including students with disabilities in this process we came up with a better product and we learned a lot about how to work in ways that are inclusive to people who are blind. The students said they felt like they were improving things for other students with visual impairments. The students were also paid and co-presented with us at a few conferences, which was awesome. It's way more impactful for faculty to hear directly from students with disabilities, than for them to hear from me.

Amanda Coolidge, from BCcampus, Sue Doner, from Camosun College and I cowrote The BC Open Textbook Accessibility Toolkit as a resource for faculty writing open textbooks to help them understand why this is important, who might be in their classroom and what they need to do to ensure their content is accessible from the start. I'm really proud that we won The Open Education Consortium Creative Innovation award for this work. Josie Gray, who is here, is working on updating this tooklit and working on making sure all of the BC Open Textbooks are accessible. The Toolkit is CC-BY licensed and has been translated into French, so feel free to use, reuse or remix this content.

WHOSE VOICES ARE MISSING?

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

When working at the university, are you ensuring that things are accessible to students with disabilities from the start? What does it say about who belongs when we don't design for inclusion?

Most universities in North America have a Disability Resource Centre. You can reach out and recruit students to help you user test for accessibility. It's important that students with disabilities are paid for this work as they are experts in accessibility and often face economic exclusion as many student jobs aren't accessible to them. Also, as most of us are paid for our work, it's important to pay people who are co-designing with us.

OPEN ACCESS

The second example is about open access.
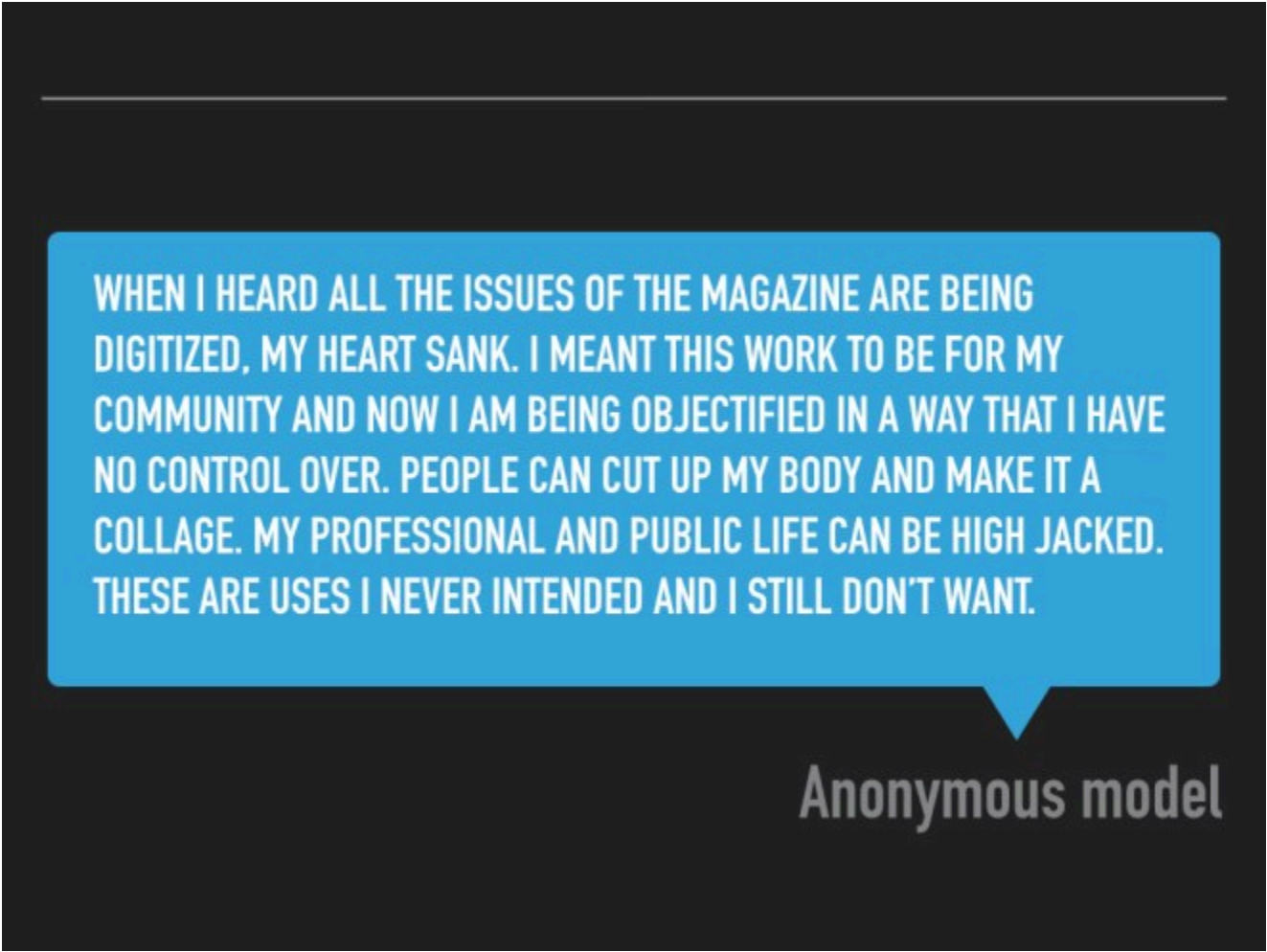
I think that we would all agree that open access to information is a good thing. This is definitely one of my core values as a librarian. However, over the last couple of years I've come to realize that this isn't an absolute and that there are some times where it's not appropriate or ethical for information to be open to all.

Last spring I learned that Reveal Digital, a nonprofit that works with libraries, digitized On Our Backs, a lesbian porn magazine that ran from 1984-2004. It had actually been online for several years before I learned about it. For a brief moment I was really excited — porn that was nostalgic for me was online! Then I quickly thought about friends who appeared in this magazine before the internet existed. I was worried that this kind of exposure could be personally or professionally harmful for them. There are ethical issues with digitizing

collections like this. Consenting to a porn shoot that would be in a queer print magazine with a limited run is a different thing to consenting to have your porn shoot be available online.

Over the last year I've been researching this topic—I visited Cornell University's Rare Book and Manuscripts Collection and found the contributor contracts, learned a lot more about US copyright law, and most importantly I talked to queer women who modeled for On Our Backs about their thoughts and feelings about this.

> WHEN I HEARD ALL THE ISSUES OF THE MAGAZINE ARE BEING DIGITIZED, MY HEART SANK. I MEANT THIS WORK TO BE FOR MY COMMUNITY AND NOW I AM BEING OBJECTIFIED IN A WAY THAT I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER. PEOPLE CAN CUT UP MY BODY AND MAKE IT A COLLAGE. MY PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC LIFE CAN BE HIGH JACKED. THESE ARE USES I NEVER INTENDED AND I STILL DON'T WANT.
>
> Anonymous model

When Reveal Digital digitized this collection, the content was licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY license. This license allows feminist porn to be remixed in ways that could appropriate the content and demean women. This license allows for this content to be repackaged, in any format, and sold, as long as credit is given and a link to the license is provided.

This is a quote from one of the models from an email to me in July 2016. She writes: "People can cut up my body and make a collage. My professional and personal life can be highjacked. These are uses

I   never   intended   and   still   don't   want."

WHOSE VOICES ARE MISSING?

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITITES

This research project has also been very personal and transformative for me.

In the past year, in my professional life I've come out as a former sex worker. I know what it's like to have content about myself online that I didn't consent to. In my case, it's a newspaper article that appeared in a major newspaper that identifies me as a sex worker and a librarian. Throughout my career I've been terrified that my employer or my colleagues would find this out. We live in a judgmental society where there are many negative stereotypes about sex workers. I was worried that this would undermine my professional reputation.

Coming out as a former sex worker is one of the scariest things I've done in my career and thankfully I've only experienced support from colleagues. By coming out I made this potentially theoretical conversation about ethics an honest and messy conversation and named my stake in the broader conversation about [The Right To Be Forgotten](#).

This conversation is about how we do good work in and with our communities. Being both a librarian and someone with sex work experience I have the privilege to speak from within our institutions. I choose to use that privilege to engage other librarians to consider the lives and perspectives of other queer sex workers.

WHOSE VOICE IS MISSING? AND HOW DO WE INCLUDE THOSE VOICES?

So, I offer you these questions for tomorrow and for your work after OpenCon.

Whose voice is missing? Whose voice are we leaving out? And how to we change how we work to really include diverse voices?

About the Author

Tara Robertson is an intersectional feminist who uses data and research to advocate for equality and inclusion. Currently working as the Diversity & Inclusion Lead for Mozilla, she has more than 10 years experience making open source and tech communities more diverse and welcoming.

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19.

OER AND THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM (PART 2): THE STATUS AND FUNCTION RATIONALE

Tannis Morgan

Originally published on November 24, 2017

Source: Getty

> Critical scholarship ought to analyse the strong forces that are at pains to create the impression that English serves all the world's citizens equally well, or those who uncritically assume this is so, when this is manifestly not the case. (Phillipson, 2001)

In my first post on this topic I put forward some high level statements on why I think OER has a language problem. The "problem" may largely be one of awareness and as the movement evolves into its adolescence I think it will be increasingly important to surface the intersection of language, OER, and social justice.

My specific concern is with the uni-directional nature of OER from English to other languages. English as a language holds considerable economic and social power, which has obviously facilitated its emergence as a global language. This emergence is perhaps neither good nor evil, but carries with it some consequences that are worthy of consideration and have been documented for some time. The positions on this topic range from moderate to extreme, with scholars like Tove Skuttnab-Kangas dedicating decades to topics such as language rights, linguicide and the consequences of colonialism to more functional perspectives such as WF Mackey's framework for understanding prestige, function, and status of language in relation to language vitality.

I was a grad student of Mackey's at Université Laval in the 90s when he was already well into his seventies. Mackey ran a internationally well known centre on research in language planning but also had been an advisor to many nations on language planning and policy, and as the story goes, had played an important role in shifting Quebec from English to French in the areas of education, government and the workplace in the 60s and 70s. What was interesting about Mackey was that he was very academic about his approach, adopting a neutral stance that leaned on the science of language planning, and thus avoiding the inevitably polarizing debates that occur when language planning or revitalization is a topic.

This seems like a good place to start in attempting to be critical about the uni-directional nature of OERs.

Language Vitality = Prestige, Function and Status

In Mackey's framework, the vitality of a language can be thought of in terms of three buckets – prestige, status and function. As he describes it "the essential difference between prestige, function, and status is the difference between past, present and future".

Prestige: depends on its record , or what people think its record to have been. In some cases this is largely symbolic.

Function: what people can actually do with the language

Status: the potential for people do do something with the language, eg. legally, culturally, economically, politically and demographically.

"The functions of a language, as defined as what one in fact does with it, can be directly observed in the language behaviour of the population of any area. The status of a language can often be modified by changing its functions."

So what does this have to do with OER and open?

Status is also "what one can do with a language also depends on what is available in it – books, films, and other cultural products (cultural status)" . Demographic status is important in the cultural production since it is tied to economic power to some extent. This is how Mackey relates the two in relation to literacy (note – he was writing this in 1976)

> " the production of reading material – books, newspapers, magazines – whether undertaken by the state or by private enterprise, is an economic undertaking. Literate people who can afford to produce and market books in their language promote it's usefulness in as much as people buy and read their products. Being economically dominant, their language is likely to be that of trade, commerce and industry, and as such a valuable language. The same people can afford to travel and to invest, thus expanding abroad both their activities and their language "

It's interesting to consider this quote by replacing reading material with OER, and situating it in a context of knowledge production and digital divide. Importantly, the more functions a language has, the more status it will have. This is not a problem per se, unless it is being done at the expense of the other languages, which some argue is in the case of English (more on this in Ingrid Pillar's book, see also Phillipson). We see this in the growth of academic publishing in English (and resulting inequalities), the growth and availability of English language university programs in nations where English is not the traditional language of higher education, or in the massive English as a Foreign language teaching industry – all are evidence of an increase in the function and therefore status of English.

The critical question for the open movement to consider is what is gained or lost when we feed the function/status machine of English. For example, is it a detriment to scientific knowledge or is it a response to an economic necessity? Who benefits and who is left out? Does open benefit when it is multi-directional or is the predominance of English as a global language facilitating our efforts? My assessment leans towards the former – hence this project on OER in other languages- but I'm aware more scholarship and discussion is required. As a parting thought, consider Skutnabb-Kanga's (2000) distinction between an *diffusion of language paradigm* and an *ecology of language paradigm*.

The Diffusion of English and Ecology of Languages paradigms

The diffusion of English paradigm	Ecology of languages paradigm
1. monolingualism and linguistic genocide	1. multilingualism, and linguistic diversity
2. promotion of subtractive learning of dominant languages	2. promotion of additive foreign/ second language learning
3. linguistic, cultural and media imperialism	3. equality in communication
4. Americanisation and homogenisation of world culture	4. maintenance and exchange of cultures
5. ideological globalisation and internationalisation	5. ideological localisation and exchange
6. capitalism, hierarchisation	6. economic democratisation
7. rationalisation based on science and technology	7. human rights perspective, holistic integrative values
8. modernisation and economic efficiency; quantitative growth	8. sustainability through promotion of diversity; qualitative growth
9. transnationalisation	9. protection of local production and national sovereignties
10. growing polarisation and gaps between haves and never-to-haves	10. redistribution of the world's material resources

So What's the Takeaway?

The story of French in Quebec in the pre-1960s revitalization is one of a local French majority where French lost status, function, and ultimately prestige to an English minority. This was reversed through government intervention and language planning, but continues to be an area that English Canada has difficulty understanding but makes total sense from a Mackey framework perspective. The important takeaway from this example is that the framework not only describes what is happening, but also gives us some mechanisms for shifting it if we choose. We have some agency in the open community to care about language planning and insert it in our conversations about OER and social justice.

About the Author

Tannis is an advisor, Learning and Teaching and researcher, open education practices at BCcampus. For almost 10 years she was the Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning, & Innovation at JIBC where she was responsible for developing and implementing an e-learning strategy, and leading open education, educational technology and research projects. Tannis is one of the founding members of the OpenETC, a community of educators, technologists, and designers sharing their expertise to foster and support open ed tech infrastructure for the BC post-secondary sector. In 2017 she founded a website that curates Open Education Resources created in languages other than English.

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TOWARDS OPENNESS PROVOCATION FOR #OEB17: HOW TO CREATE A NON-INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Sherri Spelic

Originally published on December 1, 2017

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=147

About the Author

Sherri Spelic grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, studied in Providence, RI and migrated to Vienna, Austria which has become home after 30 years. As a physical educator, leadership coach, blogger and publisher she dedicates increasing amounts of time to observing and making sense of movement – in bodies, in relationships, in texts, in the atmosphere. 2016 marked the launch of her online publication, Identity, Education and Power (https://medium.com/identity-education-and-power), which features writing from various authors offering insights on the intersections of those three themes. On Twitter: @edifiedlistener.

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QUEER HISTORIES, VIDEOTAPE, AND THE ETHICS OF REUSE

Rachel Jurinich Mattson

Originally published on December 18, 2017

Old Broken TV, photo by Flickr user schmilblick, 2006, Creative Commons.

October 2017 marked the first (substantive) meeting of the new *VHS Archives* working group—a project convened by AIDS activist filmmaker and Brooklyn College Professor Alexandra Juhasz and sponsored by the Center for the Humanities. The group is designed to bring together students, scholars, librarians, archivists,

artists, and activists—anyone with an interest in the places where analog videotape meets queer histories and queer/feminist/of color AIDS activism—to consider "the difficulties, surprises, losses and bounty" that adhere to the task of collecting, preserving, and facilitating access to "format-obsolescent video materials." The plan is to meet each month over the course of the 2017-2018 academic year. At each of these meetings, "one member of the group (or a group of people working together) will present the holdings, concerns, worries, plans for, and uses of a VHS archive important to their scholarship, activism, art-making or community."[1] The project will culminate, in the Spring, with a public event where members of the collaborative will share the results of these explorations.The group kicked off with a discussion about ethics and anxieties. Our conversations were guided by presentations from two people—archivist Michael Grant and filmmaker Tara Mateik, each of whom recently confronted ethical questions related to the reuse of video materials documenting queer and trans lives. Below is a short consideration based on the conversations that their presentations provoked.Among the many programs broadcast on the Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) in the late 1990s was a show hosted by a transgender African-American woman whose name, for reasons explained below, I won't mention here. I don't know too much about the show—not the timeslot in which it was presented, not the specific dates on which it was broadcast, not how many episodes aired in total. The little that I do know about this show I learned from my friend, Michael Grant—a moving image archivist who specializes in the preservation of magnetic media, especially VHS tapes.Grant discovered a rare recording of one of the show's episodes earlier this year, while digitizing materials from the archival collections of the Educational Video Center (EVC). After working with a short documentary made by a group of youth media makers—which only took up a portion of the VHS tape on which it was recorded—Grant fast-forwarded to see if the cassette contained any additional material. The final section, he discovered, contained a full episode of this aforementioned public access television show. Previewing the material to gauge its suitability for digitization, Grant wondered how a recording of this show had ended up on a tape in EVC's collections. As far as he could tell, it was unconnected to the work of the organization or its affiliates. Perhaps someone at EVC had recorded it off-air? This seemed unlikely, since the recording's edges were neat: it began precisely at the start of the episode and ended precisely at its conclusion. Maybe MNN had given EVC the tape upon request? This was possible—but if so, how did an EVC program end up on the *first* half of the tape? Grant finally concluded that what had most likely happened was that a tape containing a recording of MNN productions had been acquired by EVC (possibly it was something that an EVC instructor had and brought in to show to students)—which had been subsequently recycled and taped-over by EVC's producers. In any event, here it was. What to do with it?

On one hand, the video held undeniable historical significance. It was a rare example of a television program entirely written and produced by a transgender woman of color. This particular episode marked the season premiere of the show's second season, and featured clips from each of the eight episodes that comprised the show's first season. Organized largely around viewers calling in to ask questions, the show featured frank talk about the host's gender identity, her efforts to secure gender-appropriate ID, her seropositive status, and a

wide range of other topics related to life in queer 1990s-era New York City. The recording was, in Grant's view, "really moving, and kind of beautifully awkward in the cable access way." He knew that it would be of enormous value to a wide range of researchers—folks interested in queer and trans histories and the history of public access television, as well as AIDS activists, documentary filmmakers, and a range of other viewers.

But at the same time, the tape presented a set of ethical dilemmas—the most pressing of which concerned the ethics of access. Created in the early years of the internet era—long before streaming video was ubiquitous on the web—the show was meant to be broadcast (or rather *narrowcast*, since MNN's signal did not reach past the borders of its home borough) only to those residents of Manhattan who tuned in to MNN at a specific time on a specific day. If Grant digitized this material and put it online, it would be accessible to an entirely new and unintended audience. A show that was originally designed to be seen only by a few living souls on a specific date and time in a specific location would suddenly be available to anyone with an internet connection, anywhere, at any time. Add some metadata (the show's title, its host's name, a keyword or two) and it would be searchable and findable by—well, theoretically, the whole world.

The same is true, of course, for a great deal the archival material that's available online. Whenever you digitize paper materials, or physical artifacts, or born-analog films and videos, and share them—on Instagram, on Fandor, on your institution's digital collections website, wherever—you radically transform their viewership, their context, and their affordances. Even open access advocates and digital librarians worry about the ethical implications of this transformation. "Just because you can [digitize]," one observer recently wrote, "doesn't mean you should." When a recent archival initiative made digitized versions of *On Our Backs* (a late 20th century magazine of lesbian erotica) available on the internet, for instance, it raised some concern. "Most of the OOB run was published before the internet existed," librarian Tara Robertson noted. "Consenting to appear in a limited-run print publication is very different than consenting to have one's sexualized image be freely available on the internet." Robertson continued:

"Who in the early 90s could imagine what the internet would look like in 2016? In talking to some [of OOB's contributing photographers], I've learned that some of their former models are now elementary school teachers, clergy, professors, child care workers, lawyers, mechanics, health care professionals, bus drivers and librarians. We live and work in a society that is homophobic and not sex positive. Librarians have an ethical obligation to steward this content with care for both the object and with care for the people involved in producing it."

The public access television program that Grant found at EVC was different in form and content than *On Our Backs*, but it raised a similar set of ethical, privacy-related questions. When the show's host disclosed personal information on air, she was without question engaging in a radical act of bravery. But these disclosures were made in what we might now call the protected realm of live television. Once spoken, they disappeared from the airwaves; they did not immediately get indexed and made available within the giant database that is the internet, becoming just so many searchable points on a data-rich graph.

Furthermore, a great deal of information about the provenance, chain of custody, and the creator's archival wishes were entirely unknown to Grant. How did the program end up on a tape contained in EVC's

collections? Unknown. What kind of agreement did the show's host make with the organization (if she had in fact been the one to pass the recording along to the organization)? Unknown. Did she want her work digitized and made available to a new generation of viewers? Unknown. Without more information, Grant was unsure how to handle the material. After some careful research he found the host's personal page on a social media platform. He wrote her a message, and after some time, she wrote back. But her message contained very little in the way of clear directives. "My tapes are gone forever," she wrote. "I've moved on."

What did this mean? Did it mean she meant to destroy the tapes and doesn't want any remaining copies in circulation? Or had she perhaps thought they had been lost, and was sad about that but had moved on? Grant reached out once again seeking clarity; but, this time, she didn't write back.Grant's presentation about this tape—and the dilemmas it raised for him—provoked wide-ranging discussion among the members of the *VHS Archives* group. Our conversation that night touched on the history of public access television: "It was a place where freaks met Baudrillard," one participant remembered. "A little uncool, very marginalized, [and full of] edgy communities." We also wondered about the status of public access television archives— "Does MNN have an archival collection somewhere?"—and about alternative distribution and access models. Might we imagine, and build, community-engaged strategies to offer access to queer archival materials*offline*? One participant suggested, as a model for this sort of work, Chris Vargas's [Museum of Trans Hirstory and Art]—a series of a mobile exhibitions that "insist on an expansive and unstable definition of transgender."

Finally, we wondered what Grant planned to do next. Would he continue to try to get in touch with the host? Did he plan to hold on to the digital file? When, if ever, would he feel comfortable making it public? We wanted answers to these difficult questions. Grant replied that, simply, he didn't know, that he was still searching for good solutions to his dilemma.

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Just because you can doesn't mean you should is maybe a good tagline for the broader overlap between queer history, videotape, and the documentary impulse. In any case, it does a fairly good job of connecting Grant's presentation to the second discussion topic on deck at the October meeting of the *VHS Archives* working group. That conversation was facilitated by Tara Mateik, and addressed the ethics of reuse and access in the context of documentary filmmaking—a conversation that gained new focus in the light of the recent Netflix release of David France's documentary film about the African American trans activist Marsha P. Johnson.

The weeks leading up to our meeting had pulsed with news articles about the ethical breaches in which France had engaged in making his film. ("Did the Director of the Marsha P. Johnson Netflix Doc Steal a Black Trans Filmmaker's Work?," read one news headline.) First in an Instagram post, and then in a longer op-ed in *Teen Vogue*, filmmaker and activist Reina Gossett detailed the ways in which France had "capitalized on her archival research and ideas for his film." Not only had France undermined Gossett's efforts to get funding for [her own film about the life of Marsha P. Johnson], he had also borrowed heavily from her language about and framing of Johnson's life, and had badgered a long list of people to gain access to the archival materials she and her comrades had worked hard to uncover.

But Gossett's critique extended further. "Too often people with resources...become the ones to tell the

stories of those at the margins rather than people who themselves belong to these communities," she wrote. "The process ends up extracting from people who are taking the most risks just to live our lives and connect with our histories." Instead of rewarding the most powerful, or those most willing to bully their way through the filmmaking process, might we instead, Gossett wondered, "uplift and support the work of trans people to tell our own stories – on the screen, on the page, and on the streets"?

Gossett's questions offered a critical frame for Tara Mateik's presentation. Mateik, a transgender filmmaker and professor with a long history of making activist films, was among those who had been contacted by France during the production of the Netflix documentary. Over the course of the previous decades, Mateik had shot, and collected, several videos that France wished to use in his film. This included footage collectively shot by the creators of "Fenced OUT" (a collaborative documentary film about the efforts of "LGBTSTQ youth of color to save the Christopher Street pier and the West Village from re-development and gentrification" in the late 1990s); material that was collected in preparation for Sylvia Rivera's funeral in 2002; and footage shot by Mateik on his own.

Mateik explained to our group that, some time ago, he had been approached by France—who had seen the videos online, and wished to gain permission to use excerpts in his film. After initially avoiding France's inquiries, Mateik finally wrote him an email. "Dear David," the letter began. "There are many complications in terms of approving this request"—including "legal rights and ethical protections." Although the material might be in his possession, Mateik explained that he did not feel that he had the sole right to grant permission to use it. And indeed, after "reaching out to others involved," Mateik had not "received any positive responses" from them. "In terms of the footage that I gathered for Sylvia's tribute," Mateik wrote,

"please understand that I feel an enormous responsibility for this footage, which was created with Sylvia's friends and family expressly for her funeral. I tried to contact the videographer who shot the footage at the food bank but she did not reply– it's been over ten years since I was last in touch and it's been hard to track her down. I really can't release this footage to be distributed in a new context without her permission– it wouldn't be ethical."

The footage created for the "Fenced OUT" documentary presented a different set of issues. Mateik told France that he had "reached out to collective members from Fenced Out about the pier footage" and

"they raised ethical concerns about how this footage was going to be used. As you know, there is a long history of exploiting trans people of color, and of documentary filmmakers using trendy social issue topics for their own gain, without a real and sustained commitment to these communities...The members were not in favor of approving this request, and I don't have the authority to override them."

Mateik concluded by saying he was "sorry these aren't the answers you were hoping for, but please know I did pursue this to the best of my ability with the collaborators who share a stake in this work."

Mateik's reply to France really couldn't have been clearer; he could not and did not grant permission for reuse of these materials in France's documentary film. And yet, when Netflix released the film in Fall of 2017, it became clear that France had ignored Mateik's explanations, and used some of these clips in his film anyway.

Although distinct in many ways from the questions raised by Grant's encounter with the MNN material,

Gossett's and Mateik's experiences—and France's ethical breaches—called forth a linked set of questions for members of the *VHS Archives* group about the ethics of reuse and the politics of storytelling. As we considered Mateik's presentation, we wondered about alternative modes of practice, and tried to envision an approach to documentary reuse of archival video that takes into account not just what's permitted under the letter of the law, but ethical concerns, as well. Can we develop queer archival practices that engage subtle questions of power and access, the strangeness of the past, the tension between the individual and collective, and the changing historical contexts that have shaped viewership, authorship, and privacy? Can we somehow account for both the delights and the troubles that our digital technologies facilitate? In short: Can we enact community-engaged, ethically informed, queer approaches to the conundrums that lie at the center of our documentary and archival impulses? In the view of *VHS Archives* group participants, these are urgent questions which merit consideration from anyone interested in documenting queer pasts. Maybe some stories shouldn't be told in public. Maybe some archival materials should remain hard to find. Maybe its matters who tells which stories. And maybe just because you can doesn't mean you should.

Notes

1. Email from Alex Juhasz to VHS Archives group participants, August 2, 2017.

About the Author

A historian, archivist, and writer, Rachel Mattson currently serves as Curator of the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota. She holds a Ph.D in U.S. History (NYU, 2004) and a Master's in Library Science (UIUC, 2014). Her writing has appeared in The Radical History Review, Movement Research Performance Journal, and the Village Voice, among other venues. She also co-authored History as Art, Art As History: Contemporary Art and Social Studies Education (Routledge, 2010) and co-edited a special issue of KULA: A Journal of Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies (2018). Find her online at https://rachelmattson.wordpress.com/

Attribution

22.

BREAKING OPEN: ETHICS, EPISTEMOLOGY, EQUITY, AND POWER

Maha Bali, Taskeen Adam, Catherine Cronin, Christian Friedrich, Sukaina Walji, and Christina Hendricks

Originally published on February 1, 2018

The year is 2045. SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 4 has been achieved for 10 years now; there is equal and equitable education for all. This was done through a consortium of major technology companies, coming together, partnering with the United Nations and the OECD, and generously agreeing to invest in electrifying and connecting the entire globe in order for everyone to have free access to information. Save for a few non-participating areas, everyone is connected. Universities, now completely privatised institutes, are only available to the extremely wealthy, as free open online education meets the needs of the masses. The cost of physical infrastructure was an unnecessary overhead on a mass scale There are only few outliers in the [PISA](#) rankings. In addition, the [tracking software to aid formative assessment](#) is much more efficient than a physical educator. It detects deviation from the expected trends of learning, and rectifies it earlier on. Dropout costs have been eradicated by forecasting what a learner will like and what a learner will succeed in. Personal data is now openly accessible to optimise user experience, which makes it much easier for the companies to predict learners' success. The education platforms fully gamify their content and all learning, as it would bore learners otherwise; competition among themselves helps learners to stay alert. [65% of all future jobs have not been seen yet](#) but the 'Big Three' tech companies (two in the US, one in China) are doing their best to spit out a flexible workforce. Everyone subscribes to the new system; everyone is educated on the Anglo-Chinese canon of best practices in their disciplines; what could be better than free access to knowledge and information?

However, in the cyber revolution, many local knowledge institutes who could not compete with free-of-charge educational models of the revolution, either went bankrupt or were amalgamated into the giants. As a result, the main source of knowledge, what constitutes knowledge, and how we test learning gains, is now defined by the three tech giants. The educational content they provide are purely instrumental, in order to create the workforce the world needs. [Surveillance footage and algorithms built into learning environments](#) determine what profession best suits you, somewhat removing individual agency. Learners try to meet in physical spaces, but without support

from institutions or educators. The access to free information and services comes at a price. You are not selling your soul or your kidney, but pretty much everything else. Your freedom, your privacy, your deepest darkest secrets, from your conversations on Tinder to the thoughts you told your therapist. No more surprises, on either side, in 2045.

Despite efforts to open education, the levels of inequality are the highest they have ever been. Why? Because despite open education, the knowledge that is made open to everyone is best utilised by those who already had wealth and power. The Knowledge Gap theory argues that as information is increased in a society, it is absorbed differently by recipients depending on their socio-economic status. Those with higher socio-economic status are better aligned to extracting higher benefit from the educational possibilities available.

At OER18, a group of global educators (authors of this post from Canada, Egypt, Germany, Ireland,and South Africa, joined by Martin Weller from UK and Jamison Miller from US) will facilitate a hybrid workshop titled *Breaking open: Conversations about ethics, epistemology, equity and power.* In this post, we briefly explore these four themes in relation to open education, and extend an invitation for your participation in the workshop — either in-person or virtually. Rather than explain them in detail, we offer some food for thought, and invite readers to contribute their own thoughts ahead of OER18.

i) Ethics

Education is inherently an ethical and political act.

Michael Apple

["Michael Apple quote – #altc keynote" flickr photo by catherinecronin https://flickr.com/photos/catherinecronin/14950468430 shared under a Creative Commons (BY-SA) license]

Overemphasis on participation in MOOCs is an ethical question that represents other ethical questions for open: who gets to decide the framing of open for others? Whose values and norms are dominant and how might they marginalize different others?

Knox criticises what researchers deem as "correct involvement" in the MOOC, as it rejects difference. Students that participate very little are negatively termed "lurkers", when that could be the way they learn best. Knox terms this "immunisation", which he defines as the regulation of the external and unfamiliar, rather than acknowledging and embracing the difference. However, the completion rates of these courses tend to be 6.5% to 7.5%, indicating that the presumed normative student is not a representation of the majority of students. In fact, the "lurker" is a better representative of the majority.

ii) Epistemology
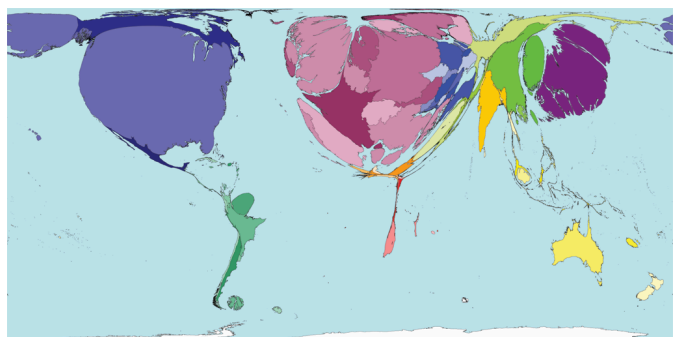
[World scaled by number of documents in Web of Science by authors living there (CC BY-NC-ND Worldmapper.org / Sasi Group & Mark Newman)]

Every quote below is itself a provocation; all are written by an African scholar or is one referring to the situation of the global South. They flow so well together we did not need to insert any text in between. Note that the articles cited by Nobes were originally written in French, a reminder that all the world's knowledge is not originally written in English.

"... *a conception of open access that is limited to the legal and technical questions of the accessibility of science without thinking about the relationship between center and periphery* **can become a source of epistemic alienation and neocolonialism in the South**". *Piron et al. (2017) (quoted, translated, in Nobes, 2017)*

"*The idea that open access may have the effects of neocolonialism is incomprehensible to people blind to epistemological diversity, who reduce the proclaimed universalism of Western science to the impoverished model of the standards imposed by the Web of Science model. For these people, the invisibility of a publication in their numerical reference space (located in the center of the world-system) is equivalent to its non-existence. The idea that valid and relevant knowledge can exist in another form and independently of the world-system that fascinates them is unthinkable.*" *Piron et al. (2017) (quoted, translated, in Nobes, 2017)*

"*The resulting consequences are, in particular, the teachers of the Southern countries who quote and read only writers from the North and impose them on their students and the libraries of our universities who do everything to subscribe to Western scholarly journals while they do not deal with our problems. (Mboa Nkoudou, 2016, quoted, translated, in Nobes 2017)*"

OER creation has an impact on asserting epistemic stance:

"creation and sharing of OER can be a way of asserting an epistemic stance, or one's own unique (individual or collective) perspective of knowledge. This is vital for people from marginalised communities whose histories and knowledge have been sidelined or suppressed by colonial or hegemonic powers. The internet as a communication platform, and OER as an educational resource that can be freely shared, provide an opportunity for educators in the Global South to contribute their own ideas, give voice to their own perspectives and participate in a global conversation" (Arinto et al., [2017])

iii) Equity
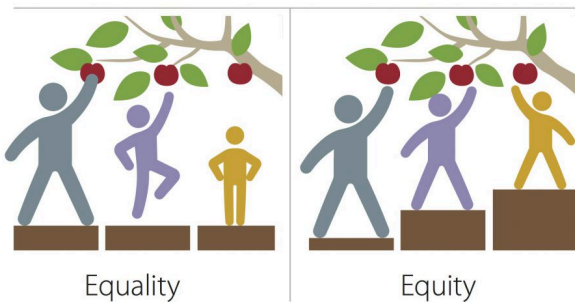
[What does equity mean for "open"? "Equity vs Equality" flickr photo by MN Pollution Control Agency https://flickr.com/photos/mpcaphotos/31655988501 shared under a Creative Commons (BY-NC) license]

The image above is meant to differentiate between equity and equality...But even that metaphor is problematic. For the most part, has openness focused on giving everyone the same access to the same apple? Has our approach to open assumed that people had an equal capacity to jump up and reach for the apple of their choice? What are the different needs of people with disabilities, and how do we nurture agency while respecting difference, rather than create dependencies?

Would access to an open online course to a university graduate, and to someone with no tertiary education, translate to equal opportunities for both?

"While the quantity of available OER is growing, this is not necessarily of value to educators ... . Added to this is the question of the appropriateness of the available OER for an educator's or student's specific use. Several of the ROER4D sub-projects found that educators and students use online materials based on their perceived relevance, regardless of whether they are openly licensed. A key aspect of relevance is language. Most of the globally available OER are in English, which means that they need to be translated for use in contexts where the medium of instruction is different." (Arinto et al, [2017])

While we see only little, if any, institutional recognition for the issue of this oligopoly of English OER and MOOCs, there are some laudable efforts to create awareness and recognition of a more diverse and rich landscape of materials that are not originally created in English. [Tannis Morgan], for example, has not only pointed out these issues, [she also curates and displays OER to raise awareness].

"Beyond providing access to educational resources, the power of OER as a means for achieving social inclusion lies in its potential to transform teaching into a more participatory process. In particular, adapting OER (for example by translating it into a local language, customising it to suit a particular set of students or combining several OER to make a new resource) broadens an educator's understanding of what teaching entails beyond

"delivering" instruction, encourages reflection on how to engage students more, and promotes collaboration with other educators as well as with students." (Arinto et al, 2017)

However:

"...ROER4D studies indicate limited adaptation of OER by educators and students. In the cross-regional survey (de Oliveira et al., Chapter 3), only 18% of educators and 6% of students reported having participated in adapting or modifying OER at least once. Educators and students generally use OER "as is" (verbatim), which is the most basic form of reuse, equivalent to simply "copying" content. The factors that account for this relatively low degree of participation in OER-based practice include technical skills (including fluency in English), pedagogical practices, institutional policies and support mechanisms." (Arinto et al, 2017).

iv) Power

Image caption: "Print Gallery solved (2003) – H.W. Lenstra (1949)" flickr photo by pedrosimoes7 https://flickr.com/photos/pedrosimoes7/25894329238 shared under a Creative Commons (BY) license

"Values and practices – which legitimate certain interests and not others – contribute just as much to global imbalances as material disparities do." (Czerniewicz, 2013)

To what extent does openness follow principles of just design, as highlighted here, such as asking: who participates in the process, who benefits and who gets harmed? To what extent do we question the actual impact of open beyond intentions, and to what extent does open truly dismantle and transform existing global

power hierarchies rather than reproducing them in a different form? To what extent is the work of open participatory and done with humility, rather than patronizing and charitable in nature?

Who is allowed access to MOOCs, and who gives this access, also expands the Digital Divide and creates unequal power relations. Countries such as Iran, Cuba, and Somalia, for example, [have faced bans](#) from accessing MOOCs due to USA sanctions. Thus the USA has control over who can access "open" education and who cannot, as they host the major servers of Edx and Coursera. Additionally, due to the server locations of many platforms, the US government has access to your data. This may be condoned by American citizens, but is not consented by other countries.

Developing country universities are often limited to producing MOOCs on platforms that require exorbitant partnering fees, or that vet which universities join based on criteria of quality or rankings (which are mostly western) as partners, with a few exceptions. Africans (and others from developing countries) become the [consumers of Western knowledge, methods and practice, rather than adapters and contributors](#).

Funders and sponsors also exercise power when mandating licensing conditions for outputs of funded projects; sometimes mandating a CC-BY license constitutes a form of asserting hegemony and power and not attended to local contexts or needs (academics genuinely concerned about CC-BY). Why not give grantees the autonomy to decide on which open licence suits their needs and contexts?

Invitation to participate

Let's start this conversation ahead of our OER18 workshop: time zones and synchronous conversations are inequitable. We also hope to create spaces where more people can contribute related thoughts and resources ahead of and beyond OER18 – which we will curate and help disseminate, with attribution, using the license of your choice.

Our provocative question is this:

How do we use openness to exclude, overpower and/or oppress marginalized individuals, communities, knowledge systems?

We invite you to submit provocations or commentary in any form, using the hashtag **[#BreakOpen](#)** on any (or any combination) of our 4 themes: **ethics**, **epistemology**, **equity** or **power** over the coming two weeks.

Provocations may be in the form of tweets, videos, images, blog posts, poems, links to existing articles, evidence-based research, philosophical essays, (scripts of) theater plays, short films, cartoons, sketches, etc. If you would prefer to submit a provocation that is not in English, please be so kind and provide us with closed captioning or a transcript (unless, of course, not providing these is part of your provocation).

We also invite you to join the upcoming workshop at OER18 entitled *Breaking open: Conversations about ethics, epistemology, equity and power* (facilitated by Maha Bali, Taskeen Adam, Catherine Cronin, Christian Friedrich, Sukaina Walji, Christina Hendricks, Martin Weller and Jamison Miller). There will be opportunities for virtual participation, so the conversation in the room isn't only made up of people attending OER18.

Additional context for this OER18 workshop

This session builds continuity and dialogue across time and space, and across several open education conferences. The first workshop in this particular series was conducted at **OpenEd17** with a majority North American audience and a more general question: "How can we destroy the Open Education Movement?". That session was designed in response to travel restrictions to the United States at the time and the session facilitators' consideration of appropriate ethical responses to these. Working to provide the same level of participation for in-person and virtual participants (as much as possible) was a key ethical concern driving the session. Both on-site and virtual participants provided a range of provocative responses to the guiding question. But even then, the majority came from North America, meaning this range was limited.

OER18 in Bristol, UK, will be the second session in this series, engaging in the same critical framework but with a modified focus, a more global audience, and a broader range of workshop facilitators. The OER18 session also follows up on many of the themes and ideas generated at OER17 in London, where the theme was 'The Politics of Open'.

A third session is planned for **OEGlobal** in Delft, Netherlands, offering an opportunity to build on the conversation further with a different, and truly global, audience. The contributions of people before, during and after these sessions will be curated to allow for comparison and contrast between perspectives on how we have been "breaking open" and what steps would help to address these problems.

The session format for OER18 has a twist in our plan to use "provocations", similar to Towards Openness workshops done in the past. If you are looking for examples of a provocation as it was used in previous workshops, please feel free to check some of them out here: http://towards-openness.org/resources/ Please also note that while most previous provocations for Towards Openness have been recorded in a video format, this is not a necessity! As noted above, provocations may be in any form.

Finally, we also wish to connect with existing conversations in this area — within and beyond open education conferences. Please use the #BreakOpen #oer18 hashtags along with existing hashtags so that conversations and communities can be connected. We have already noted the #TowardsOpenness hashtag, and thanks to Frances Bell for noting the #critoep hashtag, among others.

About the Authhours

Maha Bali is Associate Professor of Practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University in Cairo. She has a PhD in Education from the University of Sheffield, UK. She is co-founder of virtuallyconnecting.org (a grassroots movement that challenges academic gatekeeping at conferences) and co-facilitator of Equity Unbound (an equity-focused, open, connected intercultural learning curriculum, which has also branched into academic community activities Continuity with

Care and Inclusive Academia). She writes and speaks frequently about social justice, critical pedagogy, and open and online education. She blogs regularly at http://blog.mahabali.me and tweets @bali_maha.

Taskeen Adam is a Cambridge-Africa scholar pursuing doctoral research at the University of Cambridge. Her PhD on 'Addressing injustices through MOOCs' specifically focuses on digital neo-colonialism and epistemic violence. Her journey to this topic started when she, as an engineer, founded Solar Powered Learning, with the idea that technology alone could improve education. Recognising this flawed logic led her to pursue her masters on the Sustainable Implementation of the One Laptop per Child project in Rwanda, alongside pioneering the Mobile Education for Smart Technology project in India, which both focused on the sociological rather than technical aspects of implementation. These projects highlighted that historical injustices, cultural imposition, and economic dependence continue to play a pivotal role in education.

https://twitter.com/Taskeeeners

Other works:

Between Social Justice and Decolonisation: Exploring South African MOOC Designers' Conceptualisations and Approaches to Addressing Injustices

Digital neocolonialism and massive open online courses (MOOCs): colonial pasts and neoliberal futures

Open educational practices of MOOC designers: embodiment and epistemic location

Catherine Cronin is Strategic Education Developer at Ireland's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Catherine brings many years' experience as an open educator, open researcher, community educator and activist to her work in higher education. Her work focuses on digital and open education, critical approaches to openness, critical digital literacies and digital identity practices. Her recent PhD explored the benefits, risks and tensions of using open educational practices (OEP) in higher education. A born New Yorker who has made her home in Ireland, you can find Catherine online at @catherinecronin.

Christian Friedrich is the Digital Officer at the Berlin Social Science Center, a Co-Director of Virtually Connecting, a freelance consultant for open and networked learning and organizational change as well as a podcaster. He blogs erratically on his website christianfriedrich.org, and tweets as @friedelitis.

Sukaina Walji is an Online Education Project Manager at the Centre for Innovation in

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Christina Hendricks is a Professor of Teaching in Philosophy at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, where she is also serving as the Academic Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology. She blogs about teaching and learning, open education, and more at https://blogs.ubc.ca/chendricks, and can be found at @clhendricksbc on Twitter and at https://scholar.social/@chendricks on Mastodon.

Attribution

OER, CARE, STEWARDSHIP, AND THE COMMONS

Jim Luke

Originally published on March 17, 2018

Lisa Petrides, Douglas Levin, and C. Edward Watson recently released the [CARE Framework,](#) but apparently some people, David Wiley in particular, [don't care for the framework](#). Stephen Downes has already I think responded in two brief posts [here](#) and [here.](#) Stephen's posts are brief and I think pretty spot-on. Nonetheless, I'll soldier on and try to use a couple thousand words to say the same thing.

I find the Framework both exciting and timely. As I've mentioned before, I've been making up for lost time studying the economics of the commons. In particular, [I've been deep into Elinor and Vince Ostrom's work](#), as well as [David Bollier's work](#). The Framework doesn't explicitly state that it is about a "commons" but that's what they are describing. A commons. A true commons as Elinor and Vince Ostrom would describe it.
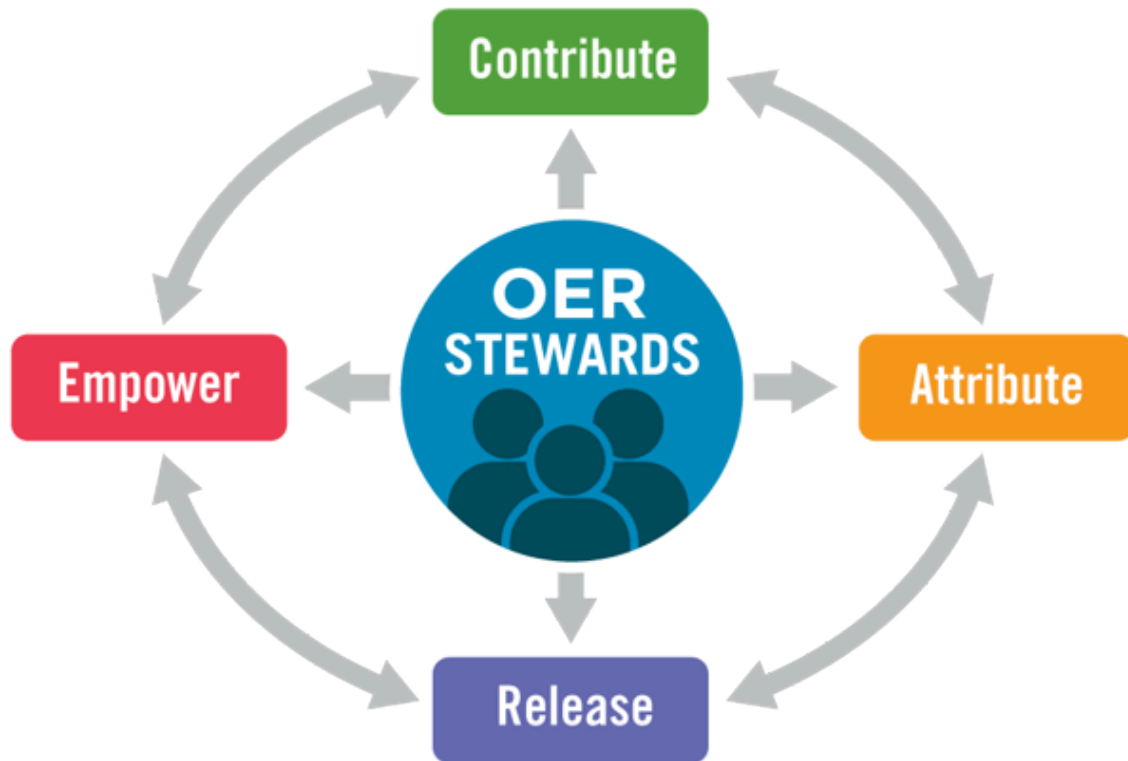
The CARE Framework for OER Stewardship

> People serving as OER stewards pursue a wide variety of strategies and tactics relevant to their specific context to improve access to education and opportunity over time. Yet, what all good OER stewards should have in common is a commitment to practices that serve to demonstrate their duty of care to the broader OER movement.

The Framework is a great start towards a community definition of our own Open Education Commons.

The CARE Framework emphasizes "membership" and "stewardship". It uses words like contribute, attribute, release, and empower. These are verbs. ***The commons is a verb.*** A commons is all about governance, behavior, social norms, production, and usage. It is a social-economic system. It is not a pool of objects or nouns that a bunch of people share.

Wiley dismisses this. He makes a nod towards Elinor Ostrom and tries to cite her work on the commons as supporting his. He misses. It may be a compliment to Ostrom.

[Tweet by Jim Luke: "The mark of a legendary, brilliant economist is after their death they are widely cited or quoted by legions of ppl who neither read nor understood what they actually wrote. Adam Smith, Marx, Keynes. Elinor Ostrom has assumed that status now apparently."]

The CARE Framework attempt to define membership boundaries in what I'll call the open education commons (I have good reason to say OE commons, not OER commons – bear with me). Wiley admits that defining group boundaries is Ostrom's first principle of managing a commons. But he dismisses the Framework and any effort to define group membership, and thereby any behavioral norms, by denying that we should even consider OER as a commons. It's here where he abandons Ostrom and returns to the old "tragedy of the commons" analogy. He invokes the idea that commons thinking and commons ideas only apply if we're discussing physical, natural common pool resources. He asserts that rivalrous goods are necessary for such common pool resources and then asserts OER are not rivalrous goods.

Indeed, he sets up a straw man using the old Garrett Hardin story of the tragedy of the commons wherein a "commons" is defined to be = open, unlimited access to a scarce, limited natural resource. The analysis is static and he gets lost in the terminology.

The first problem is that common pool resource(s) are not the same as a commons. That's Ostrom 101. It's difficult to read Ostrom or listen to her (fortunately there are many extant videos online of her lectures) and not discover the fatal flaw in Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" story of over-grazing (or over-fishing or over-hunting). Hardin's "tragedy" describes a common pool resource *where there was no commons structure or social norms governing behavior*. It did not describe real-life commons scenarios. Ostrom studied real-life cases. In the Hardin "tragedy" it's unlimited access by strictly self-interested, socially-detached, profit-maximizing individuals that did not practice stewardship. Interestingly, Wiley denies there's any possibility of "tragedy" of OER commons while he advocates for OER precisely the hypothetical regime of Hardin's "tragedy": unlimited use of CC licensed educational materials without consideration for community norms or commons governance or stewardship or recognition of being in a "community".

The second problem is Wiley's assertion that OER materials are "non-rivalrous". Wiley supposes lack of rivalry in OER goods inoculates OER from any of the risks of unsustainabilty or failure of what I'll call the OE

commons. Here we've got three sub-issues: Are non-rivalrous goods exempt from concerns of sustainability? Are OER non-rivalrous and cost-free to reproduce? And finally, just what is the scarce resource jeapardizing sustainability?

Wiley is dead wrong in his assertion that non-rivalrous goods are the only subjects of common pool resource concerns or commons concerns. He implies that Ostrom and her work on the commons only applies to rivalrous goods like natural resources (even here, not all natural resources are rivalrous. Rivalry in goods is contextual and depends on demand, supply, and property regimes). It is true that knowledge and ideas are non-rivalrous. But even non-rivalrous goods can be managed quite successfully as a commons and can also face challenges of sustainability and governance. Ostrom co-authored and co-edited *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons*. Her work inspired theWorkshop on Governing Knowledge Commons. It's a gross misrepresentation to suggest that Ostrom's work on commons governance and membership applies only to natural resource pools that are rivalrous. Even non-rivalrous goods face challenges of sustainability that need to be addressed by commons stewardship.

But let's look at Wiley's assertion that OER materials are non-rivalrous. His evidence for this is based on the tired canard that making digital copies is virtually free and we can make unlimited copies. But even in an all digital document file world (and not all OER are digital document files) the cost of copying is not zero. Disks, networks, computers, software all have costs of both acquisition and maintenance. They also bring questions of privilege and access. The marginal cost of copying may be very, very small. But marginal cost isn't the end all of the analysis as any good economist knows. OER reproduction is not cost-free. To have a very, very low marginal cost still requires substantial investment in infrastructure, fixed costs, and sunk costs. Further, just how does one costlessly copy a digital OER resource and avail themselves of all the 5 R's when the source code files for the website aren't provided or come in such a format that discourages it. Ask the many faculty who have tried to download, edit, and remix some OpenStax texts. Time is a cost too. Wiley himself sees this when elsewhere he argues that very few have the resources or luxury to contribute to the "hard, frequently painful, and seldom recognized work associated with stewardship." Clearly OER materials are not cost-less to reproduce and that alone means we must be concerned with sustainability and behavioral norms of stewardship.

A great deal of confusion in thinking about OER sustainability – or what I prefer to think of as sustainability of the OE commons – comes from confusion in terms. In particular we're confused about "resources". We use the word resource in OER and then we encounter research about the commons and CPR's, common pool resources, and confusion ensues. Economically, a resource is something that is necessary for the production of other more economically valued goods or experiences. Resources do not have to be physical objects. The traditional taxonomy is land, labor, and capital, although I think most economists today would not object to adding knowledge in some form to that mix. In economic terms, what we call OER's are resources used as part of the teaching process that produces some learning.

Note: Please bear with me, my critical pedagogy folk. I'm applying economics to teaching here at a very abstract, general level. I am not embracing learning outcomes, learning analytics, or engineered corporate "learning"

experiences. Teachers who engage pedagogies and activities that result in student agency or transformation can still be viewed as a production process in the abstract even if it's artisanal, unpredictable, and unmeasurable.

Yes, teaching materials such as textbooks, quizzes, images, and software are resources in the teaching or educational process. They are one of the resources. If those materials are free to access, to use, to revise, to adapt, etc, then we call them OER. The use of the word "resource" is legit in this context. However, are these resources fit for purpose? And by fit for purpose, I mean do they synergistically amplify the most critical resource of the process, the labor and knowledge of the teacher? To make them truly fit for purpose requires engaging the 5 R's. We must remix, revise, redistribute, and edit. It is not enough to have or use an OER with permissions for 5 R's if we do not or cannot actually do them. I may have the right or permission to vote, but if I do not actually vote that right is meaningless. To actually revise, remix, redistribute, or edit OER's requires additional resources.

The critical resources necessary for OER are people's time and expertise. This is true for both the creation of those mass distribution OER's such as general ed course textbooks and the materials as used in each class. I think of the textbooks as wholesale or bulk OER's that need further processing and supplementation to be most effective in any particular course. And who provides these critical resources of time and expertise for creation, editing, remixing, revising, and redistribution? The most critical source is faculty. Is faculty time non-rivalrous? Hardly.

Accepting the economics definition of scarcity as "unlimited wants and limited resources", we must conclude faculty time is scarce. It is valuable. Faculty make choices of how to use their time. They can choose to spend time creating, editing, revising, remixing, and sharing OER materials, or they can spend their time in a myriad of other ways.

While OER materials are indeed resources in the context of teaching, in the context of our discussions of sustainability, they are not. OER materials are not resources and not the commons or the CPR itself. *OER are the fruits of the an open education commons that utilizes a common pool resource of faculty time and expertise to produce them.* If we think of it this way, we see why stewardship, the CARE Framework, and Ostrom's principles are so important.

OER materials are not some static, ever growing pool of materials that can endlessly and costlessly be copied, reproduced, and used. That OER textbook written two years ago? It might be out of date now. Who is going to edit and update it? Who cares if I can copy that text from a decade ago? Maybe OER's cannot be over-used as David Wiley states, but they can certainly be under-produced. Under-production will lead to tragedy of the open education commons as surely as over-grazing might lead to failure of a pasture commons.

Why would faculty devote their scarce time to OER? Why should they take time to attribute (and trust me attribution takes time)? Is it only because of threats of legal action should they not comply with copyright licenses? Hardly. That's never stopped faculty before. It's because they are convinced that they are part of a community, a commons, wherein this is the norm. Attribution is what good people do. As Downes put it, they want to respect, protect, and further the collective enterprise in which they are a part.

Why would faculty devote scarce time to sharing and contributing their content or materials? All teachers

have materials they've created for classes. Not all OER's must be 300 page textbooks. There's a wealth of unshared teaching materials sitting in faculty drawers in the form of handouts. Only a small portion get shared or contributed to others, partly because sharing and making available to others is not always easy. Time. Resources. Scarcity. Again, they share when it's part of the social norm.

What might discourage faculty from attributing or contributing? Faculty will not share, will not contribute, and will not attribute when they see that their efforts and time get abused by others who don't adhere to the social norms.

It's not just over-use that can doom a commons. Enclosure and extraction can destroy a commons just as well.

Another Ostrom principle of commons management is fairness. Faculty and all members of the open education commons need to perceive that fairness reigns. There's been a steady drumbeat that says CC-BY license is the "most free" (how is it more free than CC0, I wonder?). But when I've worked with faculty to help them create, share, publish, revise, or remix their OER materials, their gut preference is typically for CC-NC, CC-SA, or CC-NC-SA. Why? Because they perceive those licenses as more fair. The NC and SA licenses make statements about "I'm contributing to the OER community. I expect fair reciprocity. I expect you to be a good steward too." Faculty react quite negatively to organizations who charge for access to CC-BY materials. Faculty perceive those organizations as using legal technicalities to abuse the good faith efforts of the community.

I haven't yet presented the CARE Framework to faculty. My expectation is it will be warmly accepted and greeted with a kind of "well, of course". I thank Petrides, Levin, and Watson for their work on it. While in many ways the framework simply captures what I think most faculty think and feel already, making the framework and its emphasis on stewardship explicit is a major step forward for the open education commons.

About the Author

Jim Luke has been Professor of Economics at Lansing Community College since 2002. He is also Open Learning Faculty Fellow in the LCC Center for Teaching Excellence. Prior to LCC, he was a business strategy and technology consultant for 25 years. At LCC, Jim has championed OER and open learning, both by modeling it in his own courses and by founding the school's Open Learning Lab. His current research interests pull together open learning and OER with economic analysis of higher education as a commons. He writes on the Web at https://econproph.com and on Twitter as @econproph.

Other works:

OER, Higher Ed, and the Commons

Scale and Scope

Attribution

24.

OER, EQUITY, AND IMPLICIT CREATIVE REDLINING

Rajiv Jhangiani

Originally published on April 6, 2018

The open education movement wants to be a force for equity. The argument is straightforward and powerful: Widen access to educational resources and those who disproportionately suffer at the hands of the exploitative business models of commercial publishers will disproportionately benefit, in both economic and educational terms. As someone who has personally benefited from generous and life-changing sponsorship of access to a high quality education, this argument is not simply theoretical for me. It is my lived experience. This is why I will never stop pushing for nor understate the importance of widening access to education. But if the open education movement holds the goal of equity as dearly as I believe we do, we need to ensure that we do not restrict our definition of equity to only those who will reuse the resources. For if we ignore the question of equity as it applied to educators who create, revise, and remix OER, we risk perpetrating harm with the best of intentions.

In my capacity as an administrator supporting open education at a public post-secondary institution with an open access mandate, I am vehement about the need to adequately support those of my colleagues who wish to engage in open educational practices. And by support, I mean through sufficient time, adequate funding, required training, and earned recognition. While this position may be construed as pragmatic or instrumental, for me it strikes at the heart of addressing equity. For if the movement relies on voluntary academic labour or severely under-compensated academic labour to create, peer-review, and contextualize OER, we are in effect perpetrating an implicit form of redlining[1], one that reserves the capacity to create or adapt OER for those who already enjoy positions of privilege, such as the tenured or those who do not need the income. In such an eventuality, despite the best of intentions, the ideologies (including biases and prejudices) associated with those positions of privilege become reflected and over-represented in the available OER. And while I often describe how powerful it can be to exercise the permission to revise OER by simply changing the names that appear within a text's examples so that they reflect the diversity of the classroom, that we have to do this at all is a subtle symptom of the types of exclusivity that can exist in OER—and something we need to work against.

Make no mistake—in highlighting this problem, I am not pitting the democratization of knowledge creation against equitable access to education. Rather, I am highlighting that access to knowledge creation ought to be equitable as well. As has been noted before, diversity is a fact but inclusion is a choice. So this is a call for open education projects, funders, and universities to become aware of the inadvertent implications of inadequately supporting OER creators and adaptors as well as to be attentive to who are given the opportunity and support to create and adapt OER. Supporting and nurturing stewards at a grassroots level and supporting the building of community across such stewards helps make open education both more sustainable and more equitable.

One of the things I love about the open education movement is that its values are those that educators largely already hold. This is why you find that even the decision of an academic department to standardize an assigned commercial textbook is usually driven by a desire to negotiate a lower cost for students and/or to avoid having students who need to re-take a course having to buy a second book. This also means that the seeds for a grassroots community have already been planted. And while the image of grass growing out through cracks in concrete may be used to signify resilience and drive, I would much rather ensure that we deliberately cultivate more fertile ground.

Notes

1. For related concepts see [Chris Gilliard's writing on digital redlining](#) and [Safiya Noble's writing on technological redlining](#).

About the Author

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Attribution

25.

OPEN AS IN DANGEROUS

Chris Bourg

Originally published on April 17, 2018

Below is the modified text of my keynote talk at the [2018 Creative Commons Global Summit](#). Video also [available](#).

Sticking with the goal of talking about things I know, I figured I might start by talking a bit about why open access is important to me, a bit about the history and more importantly the future of OA at MIT, and then spend some time unpacking this "open as in dangerous" title I chose for my talk.

Working towards more open access to the scholarly record is a pretty core part of my professional motivation and identity. I took my current job because of my desire to work on open access issues, and in a rare (and admittedly crude) attempt at artistic creativity, I dyed only one egg this easter.

In the early days of the open access movement in libraryland, I think many folx came to open access via the scholarly communications financial crisis – the ballooning costs of journal subscriptions from commercial publishers who rake in 40% profit margins has crippled library budgets; and that has prompted many library administrators to embrace open access as a potential path out of this crisis in scholarly communications (#NotAllScholCommies).

Open access easter egg

I have to be honest that has not been my primary motivation. I have been privileged to work at Stanford Libraries and MIT Libraries – two elite and relatively well-funded institutions; so I have had the luxury of embracing OA from an admittedly moral and idealistic perspective, and a better science perspective. Echoing what [Katherine Maher and others said yesterday,](#) I'm also trying to be very conscious about the fact that working on open is a passion and an avocation for me. It is not an economic imperative as it is for many individuals and institutions, and it is not a matter of survival as it is for many in severely under resourced parts of the world.

I pursue open access for the simple reason that I am convinced that when more people around the globe have

free and open access to research and to the scholarly record, we do better science, and the world is a better place. It is a better place because individuals who have access to knowledge can live more informed and empowered lives; and it is a better place because societies and communities in which more people have access to research will be better and quicker at solving big challenges – challenges like ensuring everyone has access to clean water, adequate food, decent health care, and quality education. Challenges like climate change, clean energy, ethical application of algorithms and more.

When Jennie Rose Halperin interviewed me a few days ago for the Creative Commons blog, she asked a bunch of great questions about the future of the open movement, and part of what I said was

> "There are compelling stories to be told about the harms of information scarcity and knowledge monopolies, and there are equally compelling stories about ways in which open access to knowledge and culture helps us solve big (and small) challenges across the globe."

At MIT we collect those stories from people who use our open access collection.

We have plenty of stories from students who don't have access to paywalled research, but who find what they need in MIT's open access collection. We also get comments from just regular people, citizen scientists, who want to read and learn about something in our collections.

And we get comments like this one from a professor in Mexico who would otherwise have to pay out-of-pocket to access the literature he needs to enable him to educate the next generation of engineers in Mexico:

> "My job is to teach physics and subjects related to electrical engineering in the University of Morelos. I am so grateful you gave me the opportunity to learn more about this subject. Thank you very much, because of this I can provide food and lodge to my wife and to my sons."

And stories like this from a program officer at the Asia Foundation who was able to use an article in our open access collection to support work on water governance in the Ganges river basin.

> "We're currently working ... to improve transboundary water governance over the next two years. This piece is quite critical in proving the connection between civil society intervention and better water governance. TAF does not have institutional access to this particular journal, and finding it openly available is immensely helpful."

I want to spend a few minutes talking about MIT and what we have done and are hoping to do to increase open access to research and educational materials.

This is a slide I call "Chris Bourg's totally incomplete, highly biased timeline of the Highlights of OA Leadership at MIT." All of these happened before I got there, so this is not bragging, not even #HumbleBrag.

I'm just going to highlight a few items on this timeline, mainly as a way to highlight the work and vision of some remarkable women who I think should get more recognition and visibility.

I have to start with the <u>Ann Wolpert article</u>. Ann was my predecessor as Director of Libraries at MIT and just 8 months before she passed away, she published an article in New England Journal of Medicine titled "For the sake of inquiry and knowledge: The inevitability of open access".

I don't know which metaphor is most appropriate, but this seemed like a shot across the bow of the commercial publishers, and a maybe gauntlet thrown down for fellow library directors. It certainly was a mic drop. Especially this last line:

> "There is no doubt that the public interests vested in funding agencies, universities, libraries, and authors, together with the power and reach of the Internet, have created a compelling and necessary momentum for open access. It won't be easy, and it won't be inexpensive, but it is only a matter of time."

In 2009, MIT passed a <u>Faculty OA Policy</u>, by unanimous vote of the faculty,

> "Each Faculty member grants to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology nonexclusive permission to make available his or her scholarly articles and to exercise the copyright in those articles for the purpose of open dissemination."

They turned to the library to implement the policy. And the library was ready because …

In 2002, DSpace was released. DSpace is an <u>open source</u> repository software package currently used by over 1000 org's worldwide for creating <u>open access</u> repositories for scholarly and/or published digital content. This

project was led by another incredible woman and leader in libraries and OA, MacKenzie Smith, then the Associate Director for Technology at the MIT Libraries, now University Librarian and Vice Provost of Digital Scholarship at UC Davis

MIT gets a little credit for Creative Commons, since MIT Professor Hal Abelson was one of founding directors.

In 2000 OpenCourseWare launched, with the simple but bold idea that MIT should publish all of our course materials online and make them widely available to everyone.

In 1994, Muriel Cooper introduced the idea of Information Landscapes. If you don't know who Muriel Cooper is, then she is probably one of the most amazing women you have never heard of. Cooper was a pioneering designer (she created the iconic MIT Press colophon) and a co-founder of the MIT Media Lab.

In one of the final talks before her death, at a TED 5 conference, she presented a demo of a dynamic, interactive, computer-based information landscape.

> "In an information landscape, the user appears to fly effortlessly through the infinite zoom of a textual space, reading along the way, creating connections and making meaning."

The information in Cooper's information landscape was imagined to be open and accessible.

In the 1980's, some MIT folks, notably Richard Stallman, were involved in some free software stuff: GNU, Free Software Foundation, and MIT License.

You can probably go back further to find MIT folks talking about access to knowledge, but I'll stop with this seminal 1945 essay by Vannevar Bush, in which he challenged his fellow scientists and engineers to turn their postwar attention to the task of "making more accessible [the] bewildering store of knowledge."

Fast forward a few years, and the amazing staff at the MIT Libraries recently developed and promoted an opt-in license that allows any MIT author to take advantage of the same OA policy and license available to faculty.

We have over 27,000 journal articles in our OA collection – representing nearly 50% of the articles written by MIT faculty published since the OA policy was enacted. And, any day now, we will pass 10 million downloads of those articles.

And while we are justifiably proud of most of our history with respect to open and our role in open movements, we think we can do more, and we want to do better.

And here I feel a tremendous and sobering responsibility to acknowledge MIT's involvement in the events around Aaron Swartz's arrest and prosecution, and his tragic suicide. While the narrative of MIT's involvement, both the reality and the misperceptions, is complicated, I think it is safe to say this is a part of MIT's history that we are not proud of, and our failure of leadership motivates us to do better now. To quote the MIT Report (colloquially known at MIT as the Abelson Report):

> "In closing, our review can suggest this lesson: MIT is respected for world-class work in information technology, for promoting open access to online information, and for dealing wisely with the risks of computer abuse. The world looks to MIT to be at the forefront of these areas. Looking back on the Aaron Swartz case, the world

didn't see leadership. As one person involved in the decisions put it: "MIT didn't do anything wrong; but we didn't do ourselves proud."

So we are asking ourselves, what else can MIT do to advance open access to research and teaching materials?

And it started with an [Institute-wide task force on the future of research libraries](), and the report issued by that task force in 2016.

The [report on the future of research libraries]() described a vision for research libraries firmly rooted in the library's role in disseminating scholarly research to a global community of potential readers.

There are so many good pull quotes in that report. This one is the most direct and succinct:

> "The Task Force asserts that the MIT Libraries should be leaders in … advancing more radically open systems for the discovery, use, and stewardship of information and knowledge."

Here's another one I like:

> "For the MIT Libraries, the better world we seek is one in which there is abundant, equitable, meaningful access to knowledge and to the products of the full life cycle of research. Enduring global access to knowledge requires sustainable models for ensuring that past and present knowledge is available long into the future."

One of the specific recommendations of the future of libraries task force was that MIT convene another task force – this one with a dedicated focus on making recommendations about how to further the MIT mission of disseminating research and teaching. I am co-chairing the [MIT Open Access TF]()with Hal Abelson. We are looking at many possibilities, and we are not yet ready to make even preliminary recommendations, but some themes are emerging

One theme is that open access to published journal articles is great, but the landscape is so much bigger and the potential impact is greater when we look at an expansive set of knowledge and scholarship that includes books, data, computer code, educational materials, lab notebooks, research protocols, and maybe even failed research.

We are also wrestling with how to create stronger incentives for openness for authors, publishers, funders and institutions; and we recognize that real progress on openness will require the right networked infrastructure, which can only, or should only, be built through global collaborations.

Those are some of the same themes that emerged at a [recent summit]() we held at MIT devoted to identifying grand challenges in scholarly communication. The domain experts who participated in the summit spent significant time talking about the importance of opening up and preserving an expanded version of the scholarly record – one that includes many formats and forms of knowledge. We also talked about the challenges of incentives, infrastructure and collaboration.

And keynote speaker Anasuya Sengupta, co-director of [whoseknowledge.org](), challenged us to use the open scholarship movement to decolonize knowledge and the scholarly record. A [video of her keynote](), as well as keynotes by Kate Zwaard of the Library of Congress, and Joi Ito, director of the MIT Media Lab, are available on the Grand Challenges website.

In all of these efforts to push the boundaries of open scholarship, we have tried to be cognizant of the tensions, trade-offs, and potential dangers of open.

And that brings me to the title of this talk: Open as in dangerous.

Several months ago, I had the privilege of joining Lawrence Lessig, Jonathon Zittrain, Joi Ito, Ethan Zuckerman, Amy Brand, and several other scholars and creators at an informal dinner discussion about what's next for Creative Commons.

It was a wide-ranging, heady, intense, and, if I'm honest, rather sobering conversation. Folks around the table, prodded by Lessig and Zittrain, talked not just about Creative Commons, but broadly about their hopes for an open digital commons; **and** they talked about their concerns for individual privacy and autonomy in our increasingly digitally mediated and commercially surveilled society. We talked about many things, but what really stuck with me was how much of the conversation was about the increasing tension between the ethos of open, and the value of privacy.

On the one hand, these Creative Commons advocates, and open culture luminaries, expressed a continued desire for a world where scholars, artists, musicians, and creators of all kinds openly share their work and ideas with one another. These were folks who have, to some degree, dedicated their lives and their careers to the idea that culture and knowledge will thrive and grow via openness and through the participation and inclusion of people all across the globe. So of course they talked about how to make more things more open.

But/And, they also talked about their desire for privacy and control over their own information, from the data our Fitbits track to the digital trails we leave, knowingly and unknowingly, on social media sites, through online shopping, through our knowing and unknowing use of internet of things devices, and so on.

And this was before we knew what [Cambridge Analytica and Facebook](#) had done with all our data and our friend's data.

So when [Ryan](#) asked me if I wanted to speak at the Creative Commons Summit, I knew I wanted to talk about Open as in dangerous.

And I wanted to talk about open not just as a feature of the internet and scholarship, but also at a personal level.

At a personal level, open as in dangerous is about loss of privacy, and loss of agency. And for marginalized people especially — a very real danger of being open on today's internet is the danger of being targeted for abuse, and harassment, for rape and/or death threats, and the danger of being doxxed.

It turns out that social media is not all rainbow poop emojis and cute puppies.

And yes, individuals can and do make choices and have tools for dealing with trolls and maintaining privacy and safety — but the very fact that these dangers are unevenly distributed, and they are unevenly distributed in patterns that match existing systems of oppression means that the open commons we all dream of and labor to create and support is riddled with inequality and oppression. And that sucks.

Others have documented the dangers of shared and open data — dangers experienced disproportionately by those already most marginalized and disempowered.

You surely expected a librarian to give you a reading list, right? These are all must read books about the dangers of big data and algorithms.

- Virginia Eubanks, [Automating inequality](#)
- Cathy O'Neil, [Weapons of math destruction](#)
- Jeffrey Alan Johnson, [Toward information justice](#)
- Safiya Umoja Noble, [Algorithms of oppression](#)

In one way or another, each of these books reminds us that some of the same tools and infrastructures that maximize sharing and open participation, especially where data is concerned, also maximize our exposure to collective and targeted danger.

Another danger of open is that it can result in loss of context – in [her talk at our grand challenges summit](#), Anasuya talked about knowledge and ways of knowing as existing on a continuum from embodied (or tacit) knowledge to disembodied (or formal) knowledge. As embodied knowledge becomes disembodied – as it is written and captured and extracted and shared – local, personal, and tacit context is often lost.

This is too often amplified when knowledge and other forms of expression are made open. This is part of the danger Tara Robertson, now at Mozilla, warned libraryland about when [she raised the red flag](#) on Reveal Digital's plan to digitize and make open the archives of On our Backs.

On Our Backs was the first women-run erotica magazine and the first magazine to feature lesbian erotica for a lesbian audience in the United States. The very real issues of whether the women whose images appeared in On our Backs gave anything like informed consent to have their images freely available on the web some 30+ years later is also about decontextualizing these images and the choices these women made. As one of the women [told Robertson](#) "I meant this work to be for my community and now I am being objectified in a way that I have no control over. People can cut up my body and make it a collage."

Another danger of open scholarship is that it can (and will if we don't actively intervene) re-inscribe global information inequity. At the most basic level, we have to think carefully about the implications of open access being primarily a movement for faculty at elite institutions in the global north. As scholarship from the global north becomes more open and more ubiquitously available, there is a real danger that current inequities in prestige, impact, and citation patterns will be exacerbated and open access will serve to re-colonize scholarship.

Let me wrap this up on a more hopeful note though, or at least a more defiant one.

First, I'll turn to Rebecca Solnit, who reminds us in *[Men Explain Lolita to Me](#)*, that art and culture and books are inherently dangerous, but in a good and radical way.

> "Photographs and essays and novels (and I'll add scholarship and science) and the rest can change your life, they are dangerous. Art shapes the world … if there is no one book that saved me, it's because hundreds of thousands did."

Second, I turn again to my friend and colleague Anasuya Sengupta. In her[keynote](#) at our grand challenges summit, she offered up a post colonial manifesto for digital knowledge:

> "At the heart of a post colonial manifesto for digital knowledge is the act of making explicit multiple forms of embodied knowledge and the authorities that either legitimize or delegitimize them. It is also the act of making explicit the ways in which power and privilege are embedded in our ways of knowing."

I hear this as a call for openness in the content and in the process and in the messy inequities of it all.

Creative Commons and the OA movement have been closely intertwined from their inception — In 2002, Creative Commons launched the first set of Creative Commons licenses, and in that same year the Budapest Open Access Declaration declared that "An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good."

Perhaps a coincidence, but that's the same year I started my career in libraries.

Sixteen years later, we have to acknowledge that realizing the potential of that unprecedented public good is a perpetually unfinished project.

And there is a way in which that is a good thing. Because we have the chance, the responsibility, to keep getting it better – by baking in respect for privacy, agency, and informed choice; and by making explicit not just multiple forms of knowledge and culture, but multiple ways of making and legitimizing knowledge and culture. And especially by actively, intentionally, and collaboratively centering the voices and the work of those who have been and are marginalized.

About the Author

Chris Bourg is the Director of Libraries at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she also has oversight of the MIT Press, and is the founding director of the Center for Research on Equitable and Open Scholarship (CREOS).

Chris is an advocate for equitable and open scholarship, and for the role of libraries in promoting social justice. She is co-chair of the MIT Ad Hoc Task Force on Open Access to MIT's Research; a member of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine Roundtable on Aligning Incentives for Open Science; and a member of the Steering Committee of SocArXiv.

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Other work:

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Attribution

26.

WHEN SOCIAL INCLUSION DOESN'T GO FAR ENOUGH: CONCERNS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE OER MOVEMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams

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Following Nancy Fraser's concept of social justice as "parity of participation" (2005, p. 73), OER can unwittingly be used in three social unjust ways, namely (1) economic injustice or maldistribution; (2) cultural inequality or misrecognition; (3) political misframing.

In relation to **economic injustice or maldistribution**, the findings of the ROER4D project suggest that educators and students in the Global South can be impeded from full participation by the lack of access to material resources such as uninterrupted power supply, functional technological infrastructure, affordable and stable connectivity and adequate digital literacy skills. These types of obstacles need to be addressed through a range of more anticipatory open practices by OER creators, but will ultimately need governments, donor agencies and corporates to provide more equitable and affordable access to students and educators.

With respect to **cultural inequality or misrecognition**, findings from the ROER4D project suggest that educators and students in the Global South can be deprived of participatory parity due to the current domination of Western oriented epistemic perspectives and hegemonic English-language OER unless the opportunity to create or, at least, localise and redistribute OER in preferred languages and from alternative epistemic stances, is grasped and recognised. Although the ROER4D project showed that students and educators were likely, if at all, to use existing OER "as is" and then store adapted OER on password protected learning management systems, local OER were being created in specific contexts.

Referring to the **political dimension** in the context of OER representation (e.g. geographical, urban/rural, gender) and decision-making power (e.g. institutional, national and global) are important to consider, lest "those who suffer it may become objects of charity or benevolence [...] or non-persons with respect to justice" (Fraser, 2005, p. 77). The ROER4D findings allude to devaluation or what Fraser terms "misframing" where

students and educators have few ways of challenging their position in institutional, national and international processes. The ROER4D project highlights the need for educators to have copyright over their work in order to licence their teaching materials so that they have the choice to share them as OER.

With all the good intentions of the OER movement, my concern is that unless economic, cultural and political dimensions are adequately addressed the value proposition of OER will not be fulfilled in the Global South.

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About the Author

Emeritus Associate Professor Cheryl Ann Hodgkinson-Williams taught Online Learning Design, Advanced Research Design and Researching Higher Education courses to postgraduate students and supervises Masters and PhD students. Cheryl taught and supervised in the field of information communication technologies (ICTs) in education since 1994, first at the University of Pretoria, then at Rhodes University and then at the University of Cape Town. Cheryl was the Principal Investigator of the IDRC-funded Research in Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D) project which investigated the adoption and impact of the use of open educational resources in 21 countries in the Global South. She is an advisor on the Digital Open Textbooks for Development (DOT4D) project, the former Principal Investigator and current mentor of the Cases on Open Learning (COOL) project that is investigating the readiness towards open learning of TVET and HE institutions in South Africa. Cheryl is a former UNESCO Chair of Open Education and Social Justice and in November 2019 she was awarded the Open Education Consortium Leadership Award and was interviewed for Leaders and Legends of Online Learning podcast. Cheryl took early retirement at the end of January 2020, but is still active as a consulting researcher and an Open Education and Social Justice advocate.

Other works:

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Attribution

27.

WHAT OPEN EDUCATION TAUGHT ME

Jaime Marsh

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A Keene State College undergraduate reflects on her experiences with Open Education:

So...for those of you just joining me on this 16 week journey through Tropical Marine Biology (and our 9 day trip to Turks and Caicos in 2 days), you might be wondering what all these blog posts are about, and why are we doing them? As a junior, and incoming senior studying Biology at Keene State College, several of my teachers have changed their teaching philosophy to open education. Open education is the philosophy and belief that people, even the world should produce, share, and build on knowledge that everyone has access to. It is believed that open education will promote a higher quality education and community that has been so limited by the textbook companies and licenses.
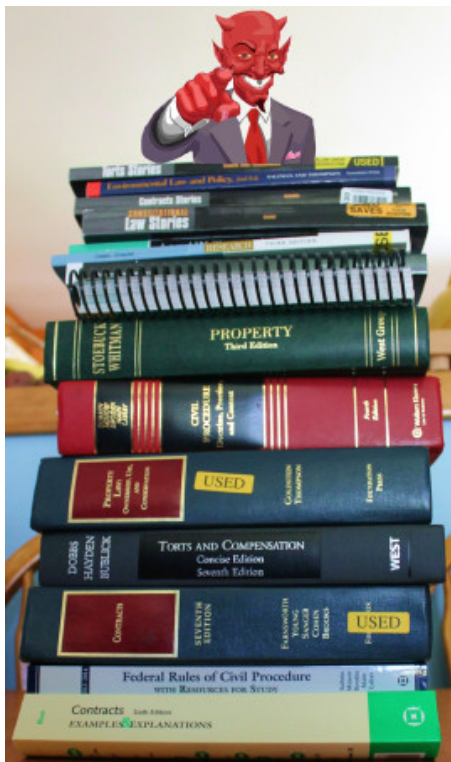
The first "open education" course I took at Keene State College was an Introduction to Neurobiology with Dr. Whittemore. I understood the concept, and like any other assignment, I did it, according to the guidelines given, and produced the work. However, I took it for granted. I didn't take advantage of the opportunity to take over my education like I should have. This past semester I am currently finishing up, I took two courses in which professors taught with the open education philosophy: Endocrine and Endocrine Disruption and Tropical Marine Biology. Noticing a trend in the upper level biology courses and professors new philosophy, I decided to give this open education philosophy a chance. I figured worse that could happen was that, I didn't have to pay for yet another ridiculously expensive text book. At first, I was hesitant to accept this change, but eventually adapted, and actually learned so much. So, here it goes, what open education taught me:

To Keep An Open Mind

The traditional methods of Powerpoint slides and textbook readings are slowly coming to an end, and that is okay. I was skeptical that this open education philosophy would work, questioned what I was going to learn, before I even gave it a chance. So, I learned to keep an open mind. Education isn't a way single, one-way, narrow, dead-end street. It is open to possibilities, and many of them, it doesn't have to be a specific way. Your education is what you make of it, no matter how you may learn, be open to new methods; it is okay.

To Take Control of My Education

Open education comes down to one word: accountability. As a student using the open education philosophy, you chose a topic, do the research, compile it, and make a blog post, such as this one. YOU choose what YOU want to learn, and how YOU want to do it, and when YOU want to do it. Noticing a theme? This is your education, and for the first time, in a very long time, maybe ever, we have a say in what we want to learn. Granted, there are parameters and some guidelines we need to stick to, but the bottom line is, you get to learn what you want to learn, and that is huge; revolutionary maybe. The take away? Don't take for granted your education, and don't let an individual, whether a peer, professor, or textbook company, have more control over your education than you do.

That My Professors Are Still Learning Too

This might be one of the biggest take-aways I've gotten from the open education method. My professors are still learning too. After going to a talk with Dr. Bonnie Stewart, she said something that really caught my eye. ["No teacher that is teaching with open pedagogy, is teaching the way they were taught. They are learning too."](#) When you think about it, it's true. This is not how a single one of my professors, whether teaching open education or not, were taught. Even those who are not teaching with this philosophy are still learning, however, these professors who are, are learning this new method of teaching at the same time we are. That really put it in perspective for me, and is an important concept to all open education philosophy courses. And also really awesome, if you ask me.

To Collaborate With My Peers

Being in a Tropical Marine Biology course with eight other students, each writing eight blog posts, on the same general concept on coral reefs, you tend to make connections in your writing with other's work. In several of my blog posts I was able to tag my peer's blog posts, even tagging my own at times, essentially making a spider web of connections allowing us to collaborate and expand our knowledge on the topic, and that is a huge part of education. I also had the opportunity to comment on my peer's blog posts, give them feedback, but more importantly constructive criticism. I also had several of my blog posts commented on and critiqued. Not only was I able to correct them, but it helped me develop my other blog posts and ultimately my E-port in ways, I would never have been able to if I didn't have an E-port or if I wasn't in an open education classroom.

To Trust the System

Another important lesson: to trust the system, don't fight it, accept it and take advantage of it. This system works, I can't even begin to tell you how much I learned, and will continue to learn outside the classroom. I

have developed an in-depth portfolio for myself that will take me far beyond the classroom, into the work place and potential graduate school opportunities. Your professors, while they are learning at the same time you are, know what they are doing, and are full-heartedly behind the open education system because they believe not just in you, but in a better education for society and the world, and who wouldn't want to be apart of that?

To Be Proud and Confident In My Work

I have always been a student who hasn't been fully confident in my work. Constantly worrying if I put in enough time, enough effort, if I did this the right way, I essentially became a perfectionist. I do not like showcasing my work, I especially do not like getting up in front of a classroom and presenting my work, and putting my work on the internet has been no exception. However, this has taught me that it is okay to be wrong every once in a while, and that I should be proud of my work. As any student does, I put in copious amounts of time and effort, you could even say blood, sweat, and tears (probably more tears than anything), but this work we do should be showcased for everyone to see, not just sent on a link to Canvas just for the professor to see. So, be proud and confident in your work!

To Put Yourself Out There and Make Connections

Recently, I had gotten some attention on a tweet I had sent out about Dr. Bonnie Stewart's talk she had given at Keene State College. Individuals of all kinds including, doctors and professors, even from other colleges, had taken the time to like or retweet my simple tweet. From there, several of those individuals then followed me, so when I complete a new blog post, I have an audience, and hope those same individuals take the time to click on my link and read my post. And sometimes they do, and sometimes they comment! These connections we make today, or even tomorrow can help shape the rest of our lives, so despite how awkward or weird you may feel for putting yourself out there, asking people to read your post, and seeing what they think about it, do it; it can lead to connections, networking, and opportunities. Take advantage!

About the Author

Jaime Marsh is a Master's of Medical Science student at University of Vermont and a Mental Health Technician at the University of Vermont Medical Center Emergency Department. She hopes to attend medical school where she can study to become an emergency room physician one day.

Attribution

28.

THE SOUL OF LIBERTY: OPENNESS, EQUALITY AND CO-CREATION

Lorna M. Campbell

Transcript and slides from my keynote at the [CELT 2018 Design for Learning Symposium](), NUI Galway.

A SlideShare element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=158

The theme of today's conference is designing teaching and learning spaces to facilitate active learning, collaboration and student engagement however my experience lies not so much in physical spaces but in online and digital spaces and specifically open education spaces situated within the open knowledge landscape. I currently work for the Open Education Resources Service at the University of Edinburgh, I'm a Board member of both the Association for Learning Technology and Wikimedia UK, and a member of Open Knowledge International's Open Education Working Group, and all these organisations are part of the broad Open Knowledge landscape.

What I want to look at today is what we mean when we talk about openness in relation to digital teaching and learning spaces, resources, communities and practices. I also want to highlight the boundaries that demarcate these open spaces, the hierarchies that exist within them, and look at who is included and who is excluded. And I want to explore what we can do to make our open spaces more diverse and inclusive

by removing systemic barriers and structural inequalities and by engaging both staff and students in the co-creation of our own teaching and learning experience.

I don't want to get too hung up on semantics, but I do want to start off by looking at a few definitions. What do we mean if we talk about openness in relation to digital education and open knowledge? This is a question that has been posed numerous times, in numerous contexts by independent scholar and technology journalist Audrey Watters who, in a 2015 post titled "What Do We Mean By Open Education?" asked

> "What do we mean when we use the word? Free? Open access? Open enrollment? Open data? Openly- licensed materials, as in open educational resources or open source software? Open for discussion? Open for debate? Open to competition? Open for business? Open-ended intellectual exploration? Those last two highlight how people can use the word "open" in education and mean not just utterly different things, but perhaps even completely opposite."

Like Audrey, I don't have a simple answer to these questions because, as Catherine Cronin reminded us in her thoughtful 2017 paper Open Education, Open Questions, "openness is a constantly negotiated space". It's critically important to appreciate that open means very different things to different people, and that our perspective of openness will be shaped by our personal experiences and the privilege of our vantage point.

These are some of the spaces that populate the Open Knowledge landscape as I see it. Your perspective of this open landscape might look very different.

- Open licenses
- Open educational resources
- Open education policy
- Open pedagogy
- Open practice
- Open textbooks
- Open badges
- Open online courses
- MOOCs (a very contested open space.)
- Open data
- Open science
- Open Access scholarly works
- Open source software
- Open standards
- Open government
- Open GLAM

I'm not going to attempt to cover all these areas, as we'd be here until next week, but I do want to explore what open means, or rather how it is understood, in some of the spaces I am most familiar with.

Open Education and OER

So let's start off with open education and OER...

The principles of open education are outlined in the 2007 Cape Town Declaration, which laid the foundations of the "emerging open education movement" and advocated for the development of open education policy to ensure that taxpayer-funded educational resources are available under open license. The Cape Town Declaration is still an influential document and it was updated last year on its 10th anniversary as Capetown +10 and I can highly recommend having a look at this if you want a broad overview of the principles of open education.

There is no one hard and fast definition of open education but one I like is from the not for profit organization OER Commons...

> "The worldwide OER movement is rooted in the human right to access high-quality education. The Open Education Movement is not just about cost savings and easy access to openly licensed content; it's about participation and co-creation. Open Educational Resources (OER) offer opportunities for systemic change in teaching and learning content through engaging educators in new participatory processes and effective technologies for engaging with learning."

And I want to come back and look at these concepts of participation and co-creation later.

Though Open Education can encompass many different things, open educational resources, or OER, are central to any understanding of this domain.

UNESCO define open educational resources as

> "teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions."

It's useful to note that this definition accommodates a wide range of different resource types and it's notable that the term OER is interpreted very differently in different communities. In the US currently, OER tends to equate to open textbooks, while in the UK we have a much broader understanding of OER that encompasses a wide range of teaching, learning and cultural heritage resources.

One of the key characteristics of open educational resources is that they are either in the public domain or they are released under an open licence, and generally that means a Creative Commons licence. However not all Creative Commons licences are equal and there is considerable debate as to whether resources licensed with No Derivatives and Non Commercial licences can be regarded as OER. Some argue from a strong ethical standpoint that while education resources produced by public funding should be freely and openly available, they should be protected from commercial exploitation by Non Commercial licences. Others take the position that open education resources should be freely and openly available to all, without exception or restriction. And there are arguments that in order for open business models to be sustainable, they must enable both

free and commercial reuse. For example some cultural heritage institutions will make low resolution images of their digitised collections freely available under open license, however users must pay a premium to access high resolution images. It's not my position to make a value judgement on these different perspectives as choice of licence will always be dictated by many factors and will always be highly contextualised.

One prominent voice in the debate about defining the open in OER is David Wiley who has defined five 5 permissions or activities that characterise open educational resources. These are referred to as the 5 Rs:

1. Reuse – the right to use the content in a wide range of ways.

2. Revise – the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself.

3. Remix – the right to combine content with other material to create something new.

4. Redistribute – the right to share copies of the content with others.

5. Retain – the right to make, own, and control copies of the content.

Wiley also argues that the requirements and restrictions some organisations place on open content, such as the use of the Share Alike licence, harm the global goals of the broader open content community.

I have no quibble with the 5Rs per se, and indeed I think it's useful for anyone who is engaged in open education to be familiar with this conceptual framework, however I would caution against regarding this as a standard to which open education resources must conform as they arguably obscure some of the more important aspects of the open in open education. Indeed some argue that any attempt to standardise what may or may not be regarded as OER is contrary to the very spirit of openness.

During the 2017 Open Education Conference Ryan Merkley, Executive Director of Creative Commons stressed that

> "Open has to be about more than the 5Rs. It is also about our values: access, equity, innovation & creativity."

And Nicole Allen, Director of Open Education at SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition also emphasised that

> "Open is not just a set of attributes, it's a set of values and practices that make education better."

Personally, when it comes to definitions such as these, I think there is a careful balance to be struck between speaking a common language, encouraging diverse opinions and listening with respect.

Open Education Practice

These values and practices are often encompassed by the term open education practice.

Broadly speaking, open education practice encompasses teaching techniques and academic practices that draw on open technologies, pedagogical approaches and OER to facilitate collaborative and flexible learning. This may involve both teachers and learners participating in online peer communities, engaging with, reusing and creating open educational content, and sharing experiences and professional practice.

One description I like of open education practice is from the Cape Town Declaration

> "Open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues."

And what I particularly like about this definition is that it focuses on collaboration and empowerment, which to me is what open education is all about.

Although I'm not a teaching academic, I do regard myself as an open education practitioner, and these are some of the ways that this practice manifests in terms of my work.

I own my own domain on Reclaim Hosting, an independent company that builds on the principles of the open web. I maintain a blog on this domain, Open World, which I use to reflect on my work and the open education initiatives I'm involved in. My blog also acts as an open record of my practice and it's where I host my professional CMALT portfolio. I maintain an active twitter account which I use to communicate and collaborate with my peers. I ensure that all the resources I produce are released under open licence, and I try to reuse open licensed content whenever possible. This is what my open practice looks like, yours will likely be quite different. However to my mind, the most important aspects of open practice are reflecting openly on your experiences, sharing that reflection with your peers, and engaging in collaborative learning.

MOOCs

I now want to move on to look at a much more contested open space; MOOCs. MOOCs have their roots in a small number of connectivist courses run by institutions such as Athabasca University and The University of Mary Washington from 2008 onwards. These innovative courses, such as the anarchic DS-106 digital storytelling course, focused on knowledge creation and generation and encouraged learners to play a central role in shaping their learning experiences. From 2010 onwards however a number of primarily venture-capital funded commercial MOOC providers, including Udacity, EdX, Coursera and FutureLearn, entered the market with a huge amount of hype and promises to disrupt education. Although MOOCs did not disrupt Higher Education, they do fill an interesting space in the education market, and I use that term advisedly in this instance.

My problem with MOOCs is that they are not open in any real sense of the word. The word "open" in MOOC simply means that anyone can join a course free of charge, regardless of qualifications. The platforms themselves are proprietary, and even if course content is openly licensed it is often difficult to extricate from the platform. Most MOOCs are free as in beer rather than free as in speech and even this is increasingly debatable as many now charge for premium features such as certification and continued access to course materials.

Of course one solution to this is to ensure all MOOC content is also available in open spaces off these commercial platforms, and that's the road we've gone down at Edinburgh. In order to make sure the high quality MOOC content we produce for the courses we run on FutureLearn, Coursera and EdX is accessible

and reusable, for both our own staff and students, and others outwith the University, we make sure is can be downloaded under open license from our multi-media asset management system, Media Hopper Create.

Wikimedia

Of course no discussion of open online spaces would be complete without Wikpedia and its associated projects.

Here in Ireland there is an active Community User Group which promotes the creation and dissemination of free knowledge. And in the UK we have a Wikimedia chapter, Wikimedia UK, which works in partnership with organisations from the cultural and education sectors to unlock content, remove barriers to knowledge, develop new ways of engaging with the public and enable learners to benefit from the educational potential of the Wikimedia projects. Wikimedia UK also supports a number of Wikimedians in Residence who work with a range of education and public heritage organisations throughout the country. A new Wikimedia Scotland Coordinator, has also just been appointed and in Wales there is a National Wikimedian, based at the National Library in Aberystwyth.

At the University of Edinburgh we believe that contributing to the global pool of Open Knowledge through Wikimedia is squarely in line with our institutional mission and we also believe that Wikipedia is a valuable learning tool to develop a wide range of digital and information literacy skills at all levels across the curriculum. Our Wikimedian in Residence, Ewan McAndrew, works to embed open knowledge in the curriculum, through skills training sessions, editathons, Wikipedia in the classroom initiatives and Wikidata projects, in order to increase the quantity and quality of open knowledge and enhance digital literacy.

There is no question that Wikipedia is an invaluable source of open knowledge, however it is not without bias. The coverage of subject matter on Wikipedia is neither uniform nor balanced and many topics and areas are underrepresented, particularly those relating to women, people of colour and minority groups. For example, on English language Wikipedia only about 17% of biographical articles are about women, and the number of female editors is between 10 and 14%. Hopefully you don't need me to tell you why this lack of diversity and inclusivity is a serious problem. However it is a problem that is being addressed by the Foundation itself, by projects such as Wiki Women in Red, and by editors and Wikimedians in Residence across the world.

At Edinburgh an important aspect of our Wikimedian in Residence's work is to help improve the coverage and esteem of Wikipedia articles about women, and underrepresented minorities, and to redress the gender imbalance of contributors by encouraging more women to become editors. And I'm very pleased to say that over the last year 65% of participants at our editathons were women. There has also been phenomenal progress in Wales, and in 2016, Welsh Wikipedia became the biggest language Wikipedia in the world to achieve gender balance.

Inclusion, Exclusion and Structural Inequality

Wikipedia's well known problem with gender balance is a notable example of systemic bias. Wikimedia is an open community, an open space, that anyone can contribute to in theory, however in reality there are many factors that prevent certain groups from entering this space. In the case of women editors, former Wikimedia Foundation executive director Sue Gardner identified a range of systemic factors that discourage women from contributing to the encyclopaedia, including lack of time, lack of self confidence, aversion to conflict, and the misogynistic atmosphere of the community. In addition, the very principles which underpin the encyclopaedia discriminate against marginalised groups. Wikipedia is based on citation, yet in fields where women and people of colour have been traditionally barred, or their contribution has been neglected or elided, it is much harder to find reputable citations that are critical for the creation of good quality articles. Any article that is deemed to be inadequately cited runs the risk of rapid deletion, thus replicating real world power imbalances, privileges and inequalities.

Wikimedia is not the only open space that suffers from issues of systemic bias and structural inequality. In a paper on Open Initiatives for Decolonising the Curriculum, in the forthcoming book Decolonising the University edited by Gurminder K Bhramba, open source software developer Pat Lockley notes that universities with the highest percentages of black staff are those which spend the least, and in many cases nothing, on Open Access article processing charges. And he goes on to ask whether Open Access really is broadening and diversifying academia, or merely reinforcing the existing system.

When we look at MOOCs supported on commercial platforms, the situation is arguably worse. Far from democratizing higher education and reaching out to disadvantaged groups, numerous studies have shown that the majority of MOOC enrolments tend to be young, male, educated, and from the developed countries of the global north. Gayle Christensen, one of the authors of an important report on the University of Pennsylvania's Coursera courses, noted that MOOCs are failing to reach they students they had intended to empower and instead they are giving more to those who already have a lot.

Similarly, in its 2017 survey on open source software development practices and communities, Github, another important open online space, reported huge gaps in representation and concluded that the gender imbalance in open source remains profound. From a random sample of 5,500 respondents 95% were men; just 3% were women and 1% were non-binary.

And there are many other examples of similar structural inequalities in open spaces and communities. We all need to be aware of the fact that open does not necessarily mean accessible. Open spaces and communities are not without their hierarchies, their norms, their gatekeepers and their power structures. We need to look around our own open communities and spaces and ask ourselves who is included and who is excluded, who is present and who is absent, and we need to ask ourselves why. Because nine times out of ten, if certain groups of people are absent or excluded from spaces, communities or domains, it is not a result of preference, ability, or aptitude, it is a result of structural inequality, and in many cases it is the result of multiple intersecting

inequalities. Far too often our open spaces replicate the power structures and inequalities that permeate our society.

In a recent article titled "The Dangers of Being Open" Amira Dhalla, who leads Mozilla's Women and Web Literacy programs, wrote:

> "What happens when only certain people are able to contribute to open projects and what happens when only certain people are able to access open resources? This means that the movement is not actually open to everyone and only obtainable by those who can practice and access it.
>
> Open is great. Open can be the future. If, and only when, we prioritize structuring it as a movement where anyone can participate and protecting those who do."

So how do we change this? Well half the battle is recognising that there is a problem in the first place, taking steps to understand that problem, and then doing the hard work to effect change. And those of us who are already inside these open spaces and communities need to take positive action to make these spaces, not just open, but accessible and inclusive. And to do that, to borrow a phrase from the Suffragettes, we need Deeds not Words.

Open Education and Co-Creation at UoE

One way we can start to ensure that our open education spaces, communities and resources really are open and participatory is to engage with our students in co-creation. So what I want to do now is briefly look at a few initiatives from the University of Edinburgh that involve students in the co-creation of learning experiences, open knowledge and open educational resources.

At Edinburgh we believe that open education is strongly in line with our institutional mission to provide the highest quality learning and teaching environment for the greater wellbeing of our students, and to make a significant, sustainable and socially responsible contribution to Scotland, the UK and the world, promoting health and economic and cultural wellbeing. Students have always played a key role in shaping our vision of openness. Together with Melissa Highton, Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services, it was the Edinburgh University Student Association (EUSA) that provided the initial impetus for the development of an OER policy at the university. Our vision for OER builds on our excellent education and research collections, traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment and the university's civic mission, and right from its inception this vision has encouraged both staff and students to engage with the use and creation of OER and open knowledge, to enhance the quality of the student experience while at the same time making a significant contribution to the cultural and digital commons. This vision is backed up by our OER Policy and an OER Service which provides staff and students with advice and guidance on creating and using OER, and which provides a one stop shop where you can access open educational resources produced by staff and students across the university. Because we believe it's crucially important to back up our policy and vision with support.

So let's look at some examples of how our students are engaging in the co-creation of open learning and open knowledge

LGBT+ Healthcare 101

A number of studies have shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual health is not well-covered in Medical curricula, however knowledge of LGBT health and of the sensitivities needed to treat LGBT patients are valuable skills for qualifying doctors.

The LGBT+ Healthcare project involved a team of undergraduate medical students, who sought to address the lack of teaching on LGBT health through OER. The students remixed and repurposed resources originally created by Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. In order to contextualise these materials, new open resources in the form of digital stories recorded from patient interviews were also created by the students and released under open license. These resources were then repurposed by Open Content Curation Student Interns, to create open educational resources suitable for Secondary School children of all ages. All resources are available through multiple channels including the University's OER Service Open.Ed portal and TES.

Open Content Curation student interns play an important role in OER creation at the University, helping to repurpose and share resources created by staff and other students while at the same time developing their own digital literacy skills. We're now in the third year of this internship and the feedback we have received from the students has been nothing short of inspiring.

Geosciences Outreach and Engagement

Another hugely successful example of co-creation is the School of Geosciences Outreach and Engagement course. Over two semesters, students develop an outreach project that communicates an element of GeoSciences outside the university community. Students work with schools, museums, outdoor centres and community groups to create a wide range of resources for science engagement. Students gain experience of science outreach, public engagement, teaching and learning, and knowledge transfer while working in new and challenging environments and developing a range of transferable skills that enhance their employability.

The Geosciences Outreach and Engagement course has proved to be hugely popular with both students and clients. The course has received widespread recognition and a significant number of schools and other universities are exploring how they might adopt the model.

Here's just one quote from a student, Rebecca Astbury, who participated in the course;

> "Geoscience Outreach and Engagement is one of the most interesting courses I have undertaken in my 5 years at Edinburgh. Not only do I get the opportunity to find new and exciting ways to inform people of all ages about Geosciences, I'm also learning valuable skills to enhance my future career after university. This course has taught me that everyone has a different way of learning, and instead of following one strict path, we should expand our ideas on how to effectively communicate science to the general public."

A key element of the Course is to develop resources with a legacy that can be reused by other communities and organisations. Our Open Content Curation Interns repurpose these materials to create open educational resources which are then shared online through Open.Ed and TES where they could be found and reused by other teachers and learners.

Wikimedia in the Classroom

I've already mentioned the work of our Wikimedian in Residence and I'm not going to go into this amazing project in any detail as that would be a whole other talk and I'm already running out of time. Instead I'm going to let one of our students speak for themselves. This interview with Senior Honours Biology student Aine Kavanagh was recorded by our Wikimedian in Residence, Ewan McAndrew. Here's Aine is talking briefly about her experience of writing a Wikipeda article as part of a classroom assignment in Reproductive Biology.

> *A video element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can watch it online here:*
 https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=158

Video by [Ewan McAndrew](#), Wikimedian in Residence, University of Edinburgh

And the article that Aine wrote on high-grade serous carcinoma, one of the most common forms of ovarian cancer, has now been viewed almost 34,000 times. It's hard to imagine another piece of undergraduate work having such an impact. This is just one of a number of courses at the University that have successfully embedded Wikipedia assignments and you can listen to more of our students' testimonies and [find out about the work of our Wikimedian in residence here](#).

These are all examples of open education initiatives that are not just open, but open, diverse, collaborative and participatory and, to my mind, this is what is really important.

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to go right back to the title of this talk, The Soul of Liberty, which is taken from a quote by Frances Wright, the Scottish feminist and social reformer, who was born in Dundee in 1795, but who rose to prominence in the United States as an abolitionist, a free thinker, and an advocate of women's equality in education. Frances wrote:

> "Equality is the soul of liberty; there is, in fact, no liberty without it."

I think the same could also be said of openness; equality is the soul of openness. Two hundred years down the

line, Frances' conviction strikes a chord that echoes with Amira Dhalla's affirmation that open can only be the future if we design and structure open spaces and communities so that anyone can participate.

Those of us here today already have the privilege to participate in open education spaces and open knowledge communities, and we can not keep that privilege to ourselves. We need to identify the barriers that prevent some people from participating in the spaces we enjoy, and we need to do what we can to remove these systemic obstructions. We need to be aware of our own privilege, and be sensitive to whose voices are included and whose are excluded, we need to know when to speak and when to be silent. To me this is what openness is really about, the removal of systemic barriers and structural inequalities to provide opportunities to enable everyone to participate equitably, and on their own terms. We need to ensure that when we design our learning spaces, whether physical or virtual, online or on campus, they really are open to all, regardless of race, gender, or ability, because openness is not just about attributes, definitions and licences, openness is also about creativity, access, equality, and inclusion, and ultimately, it's about expanding access to education, supporting social inclusion and enabling learners to become fully engaged digital citizens.

About the Author

Lorna has a longstanding personal commitment to supporting open education; she founded the Open Scotland initiative, was co-chair of the OER16 Open Culture Conference, is a Trustee of Wikimedia UK and the Association for Learning Technology. Lorna was also the driving force behind the Scottish Open Education Declaration. Her blog, Open World, http://lornamcampbell.org/, features personal reflections on all aspects of open education, and she is an active member of the #femedtech network. Lorna currently works as a learning technology service manager within the University of Edinburgh's Open Educational Resources Service.

Other works:

Shouting From The Heart

Drawing the Line: Reflections on open practice and digital labour

Attribution

29.

OPEN AS A SET OF VALUES, NOT A DESTINATION

Billy Meinke-Lau

This is the transcript from a keynote delivered November 11th at the Open Education Ontario Summit in Toronto. Thanks to David Porter, Jenni Hayman, Terry Greene, Lillian Hogendoorn, Ali Versluis, Jessica O'Reilly, and Lena Patterson for facilitating a smooth, engaging event and for giving me the opportunity to share some big, difficult ideas with the Open Rangers.

Aloha mai kākou.

Canada Flag by Alirod Ameri / CC BY

Thank you for sharing your time with me this afternoon. Being in Canada for the first time feels sort of like coming home to a place I've never been. Part of this has to do with the very warm hospitality of the typical person on the street. The customs agent at the airport told me to break a leg in my talk – and I'm going to try to do just that.

But being in Canada also feels a little like home because I've worked in the "open" for a number of years now, and my worldly colleagues from this place on the continent have continually impressed me with their kindness and generosity. The seemingly small, personal gestures that make working in this community worthwhile do not go unnoticed – they signal a sense of shared values. For the next short while here, I'm going to share with you the brief history of me, my work in things you would consider "open" and how I think this community is actually nearing an inflection point where we must hold strong to our values while we face challenges from all angles. The publishing industry does not always appreciate the work we do, obviously. Policymakers are waiting for us to prove that this thing called "open education" actually works. And while this community grows, I'm afraid we are developing an unhealthy tolerance for the lack of empathy and care required for us to appreciate the human aspect of this work... and this absence will divide us more than it brings us together.

It's also important for me to mention that as a white male, I am given an extraordinary amount of privilege and quite honestly there are others in this room who should probably be at this microphone instead of me, and that would deliver messages I would stand behind without question. This isn't to say that I'm experiencing imposter syndrome…as I do understand that I have a place in this community and this movement…but that it's important to listen to many voices, not just mine.

So I live in Hawaii and I work at the University of Hawaii's Manoa campus, the "flagship" campus of the system, offering undergrad, graduate, and doctoral degrees. I serve as the OER Technologist for the campus, but that title is something of a misnomer because like many titles, it doesn't reflect the work I actually do. I'm also a first-year PhD student in the political science department, specifically the futures studies program, which has something of a reputation. I figure that even if at the end of this road I conclude that being a "futurist" is not actually a thing, I'll at least know better how to argue with the tin-foil hats that pop up from time to time. Or I'll become one of them, I'm not quite sure.

Paranoid at work by Apionid / CC BY-NC-ND

But I wasn't always working in "open" space, and like many of you I wandered a bit before coming into the work that I do now. Throughout college I conducted one-on-one and group therapy with children with a range of disabilities, from basic language and motor skills to life and interpersonal skill development. Finishing my undergraduate degree about ten years ago, the economy was taking a nosedive and the most stable work available was at an elementary school where I lived in Santa Barbara, California. The school was in a low-income area and served an almost exclusively Hispanic English-Language Learner student population. The school was eligible for grants, and I was tasked with setting up a computer lab that had literally had technology thrown at it. I had no idea what I was doing, but I unboxed the desktops and made friends with the school district IT folks, and somehow figured out how to make the computers do things that the kids enjoyed and that the grade-level teachers valued. This isn't to say that I had any idea what I was doing, but that was my foray into what I consider to be traditional, institutionalized education. Learning outcomes, teaching teams, teacher strikes, tetherball courts, the whole bit. It was beautiful fun, but at the end of my second year my principal told me to go to grad school, and that she wouldn't hire me back.

Needing a change of pace for reasons beyond my job, I left for Hawaii and entered the Learning Design and Technology masters program at the University of Hawaii (the same campus I work at now). In what was largely a tech-focused instructional design program that loved itself some ADDIE modeling and gamification, I found a course called "open source in education" and it changed my life.

The course required students to contribute in some way to an open source project that had implications in education. The Mozilla Foundation was spinning up its Open Badges project – which is all but non-existent at this point – and I started joining their community calls and working on their documentation. The sense of welcome and open participation was like nothing I had seen before. In many corners of academia we are told to keep our work close to our chests lest we be scooped by a competitor, and it shocked me that such talented people at Mozilla had flipped this paradigm on its head. They had roadmaps and roles and funding and were building a team. I finished my masters degree and painfully left Hawaii for the Bay Area. I wanted to work in tech, and I wanted it to be in the "open" movement.

A few months after relocating to Mountain View, California, I was still jobless and was losing motivation to try to work in the open. Mozilla hadn't called, and despite offers from for-profit edtech companies, I took the last of my savings and went on a slingshot tour of Europe with two of my best friends. My morale improved and my bank account shrank, but I also found myself only a few hundred miles away from Helsinki, Finland in time for the first Open Knowledge Festival being put on by the Open Knowledge Foundation – now referred to simply as Open Knowledge. I figured, "what the hell," and volunteered with the event, helping with registration and session facilitation, and immersing myself in the "open" community that gathered there.

Image by Daniel Schildt / CC BY-ND

Lucky me, folks who worked at Creative Commons happened to be in attendance, and they were looking for an intern to join their science and data unit. Ironically, I was meeting the people at CC more than 5,000 miles away from home, but the room I rented in Mountain View was less than three miles from their office headquarters. Lucky again, I took the internship and entered what I referred to at the time as my personal accelerator. This meant being able to affiliate myself with an organization whose standing in the community was huge...the licenses are the linchpin of the work we do.

During the 14-month internship, I learned about this thing called Open Access, and learned what it meant for "data" to be open. I bumped shoulders with Mozillians once again (woohoo!) and made many friends whose work intersected with mine in the open space. Seeing how the sausage was made was enlightening, but I also paid a price for it. You see, my supervisor was a serial harasser and misogynist, and while I grew in some ways I was also dismantled on a daily basis by this person. You don't quite understand the power dynamics at play until your supervisor who harassed and bullied you privately and in front of others actively speaks out against your being hired on. Fortunately my community building work around what I think may have been the first MOOC about open science during the internship and my friendly can-do attitude meant that I landed a job with CC. After the announcement of my being hired on as a staff member on the education team, and no longer underneath him, my harasser had the gaul to invite me to lunch and to then tell me about how he spoke out against my hiring. He told me to leave, to go back to school, to just go. I didn't.

We are all going to have moments in life, if we haven't already, where wrongs are made against people who are trying to do good work, trying to help push forward this big rock we call "Open". What we do in these moments will define us, and if you take nothing from this keynote talk, I ask you to not look the other way when it happens near you. Many of us have stories. Some of us have been treated poorly, and some of us have been spared this pain...but may have seen it happen to others. I care more about this community than most, and I don't just "think" we should do better. I think we MUST do better. Let's talk about what it means to have spaces that encourage diverse voices to speak, and to allow the work we do in this movement to no longer be considered "on the fringes".

Image by Frederic Poirot / CC BY-SA

The writer William Gibson is known for having said that the *future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed*. I am telling you right now that much of the work we do in open education is the future, and we all have a hand in helping the best parts of it become part of the mainstream.

Let's return to this notion of the open community being at an inflection point.

Creative Commons champions the notion of the commons being larger than it's ever been before. In fact they recognize that over 400 million CC-licensed images are on the photo sharing site Flickr, representing about ¼ of everything we consider to be the digital commons. But in a single moment, the powers that be at Flickr decided that their model of offering generous free space for images was no longer working, and they announced a plan to begin deleting images on free accounts that exceed 1,000 images. To keep them all, they said we would each need to upgrade to a Pro account for around $50 per year. Complaints from the community came swiftly and in volume, criticizing the move and calling for a fix. Despite the new promise from Flickr that existing CC licensed images would not be deleted...the message is clear: the technology platforms we rely on are changing and to leave things the way they are is to put our work at risk. To bring this issue into focus, this presentation is a bit of a ticking time bomb as several photos have been linked from Flickr and one day the digital representation of this talk will begin to unravel. I'm sorry for that.
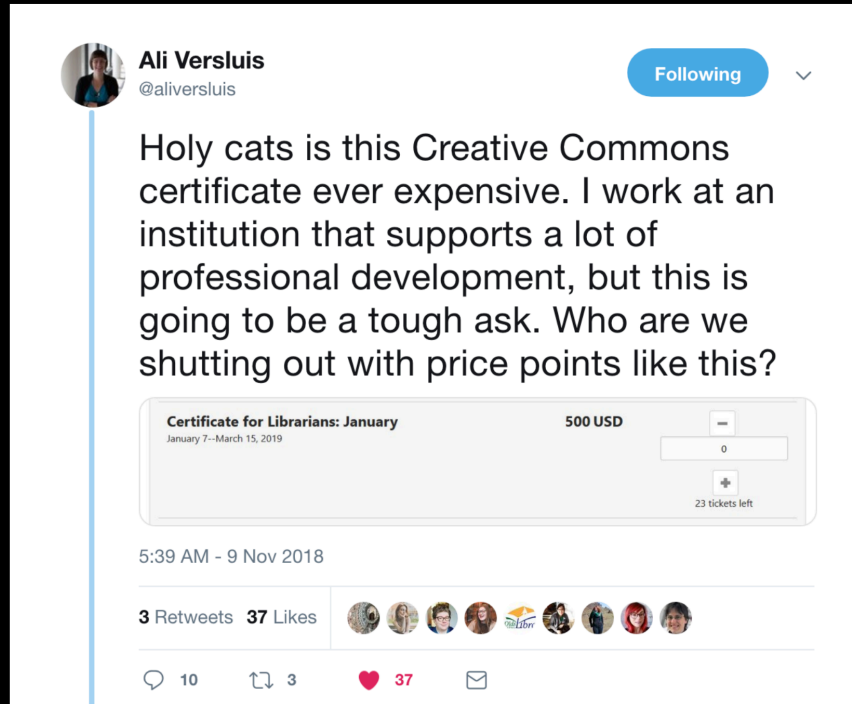
CC itself as a steward of the commons is struggling to find its purpose in the movement. Version 4.0 of the licenses were finished when I worked with them, and they were designed to work well across the globe for ten years after their release. I cannot vouch for the quality or usefulness of the CC certificate program, but now that the program is in its second year, the cost of participation is rising to a point that puts it out of reach of many folks. The lack of meaningful engagement on behalf of the organization makes me concerned about how out of touch they are with the individuals and communities who are actually doing the work, the "commoning". Pink glittery lapel pins are nice, but the general lack of innovative, inclusive projects leaves me asking questions that have stirred controversy.

As the platforms and organizations that once propped up the movement are shifting and facing a crisis of purpose, the annual gatherings that represent much of the face-time we get with parts of the larger community are putting individuals at risk. Signaling what I choose to describe as a departure from values, a religious keynote speaker was announced as a late addition to the 2017 running of the OpenEd conference. While I absolutely advocate for religious freedom for all who work in open communities, this appeared to be a form of religious colonialism on behalf of a belief system that actively discriminates against individuals who identify as being outside of the binary. Push back from the community after the announcement eventually caused the withdrawal of the keynote speaker, but I worry that we will see similar acts in the future as the memory of it fades.

Only a month ago at the 2018 edition of the same event, there was no Code of Conduct to help guide collegial, professional interaction among attendees. Despite global incidents of misconduct and misogyny in the world that reach to the highest levels of government, the Opened18 Code of Conduct was an afterthought, leaving appropriate behavior among the thousand attendees open to interpretation with real consequences. What's more, having a Code of Conduct is only the first step, and the hard work actually happens when complaints are raised and the Code is put to the test. The implementation of a code is, like many aspects of our work, a human activity that is subject to the same fumbling and folly that will drive would-be contributors away from the movement. I'm not impressed, and am even less so in terms of the response to critique from the event organizers.

Image by Mozilla in Europe / CC BY

Now, this isn't to say that it can't be done well. Not at all, not for one second do I think this is something that is beyond the power of the community. An example of how it has been done well in the past is the Mozilla Festival. Mozfest, as it's lovingly called, was inspirational for me not only in terms of the ideas and people doing work on the edges of open, but also for its commitment to inclusiveness. All three years I attended and facilitated at Mozfest, Allen Gunn ran a facilitators session that brought the code of conduct for the event to front and center. The shared understanding of what it means to collaborate and treat each other well, and the clear path to deal with things when not all folks could stayed the course, brought an air of safety and confidence to the event that I have yet to see be done better. It's not easy, but it's essential.

A theme is emerging here that I hope is becoming clear: human activity is messy.

Fortunately, what is emerging from these missteps in the open community are bright areas and examples of leadership that take seriously the messy nature of this work. Only two weeks ago, ahead of the 2018 edition of OpenCon, the organizers took it upon themselves to not only update their Code of Conduct, but also to outline what changes they made to it and functionally what the changes would do to support their event as a safe space.

> "As we described in a blog post earlier this month, healthy communities are only possible when the individuals within them feel safe, and an effective code of conduct is essential to providing a safe and welcoming environment for participants—both in-person and online. We recognize that the work of improving the code of conduct and its implementation is an ongoing process, and the changes that we are releasing today reflect our latest thinking on how to work to create a healthy community, as well as our intention to continue learning and making improvements."

This is leadership needed in many communities, not just open ones, and seeing such forward thinking in our movement is extremely encouraging – it makes me proud to work in this space. If we are to grow this movement and realize the positive change it can bring, more work like this is absolutely needed. This is the kind of work we must do before we can actually get to work, so to speak.

I want to stop here and acknowledge my criticality. If I have offended anyone, I am sorry, but I think we need to be much more thoughtful about how to approach our work that absolutely depends on people. In writing about critical openness, Monica Brown recently reflected on the concept of critical openness:

"Critical openness is a call for challenging questions – ones contextualized in the histories and lived experiences from people around the globe – with the goal of generating productive and meaningful dialogue across power and difference. Critical openness calls us in to find approaches to research and education that are built to serve communities and push forward change...Critical openness runs parallel to open advocacy ensuring that the practices furthered by the open community don't carry on the very systems that have resulted in the widespread exclusion in the first place."

As has been said before, a critical movement is a stronger movement. It is when we stop questioning the safety of our space, the intentionality of our actions, and ignore the historical contexts in which we work that people will be left out, or worse.
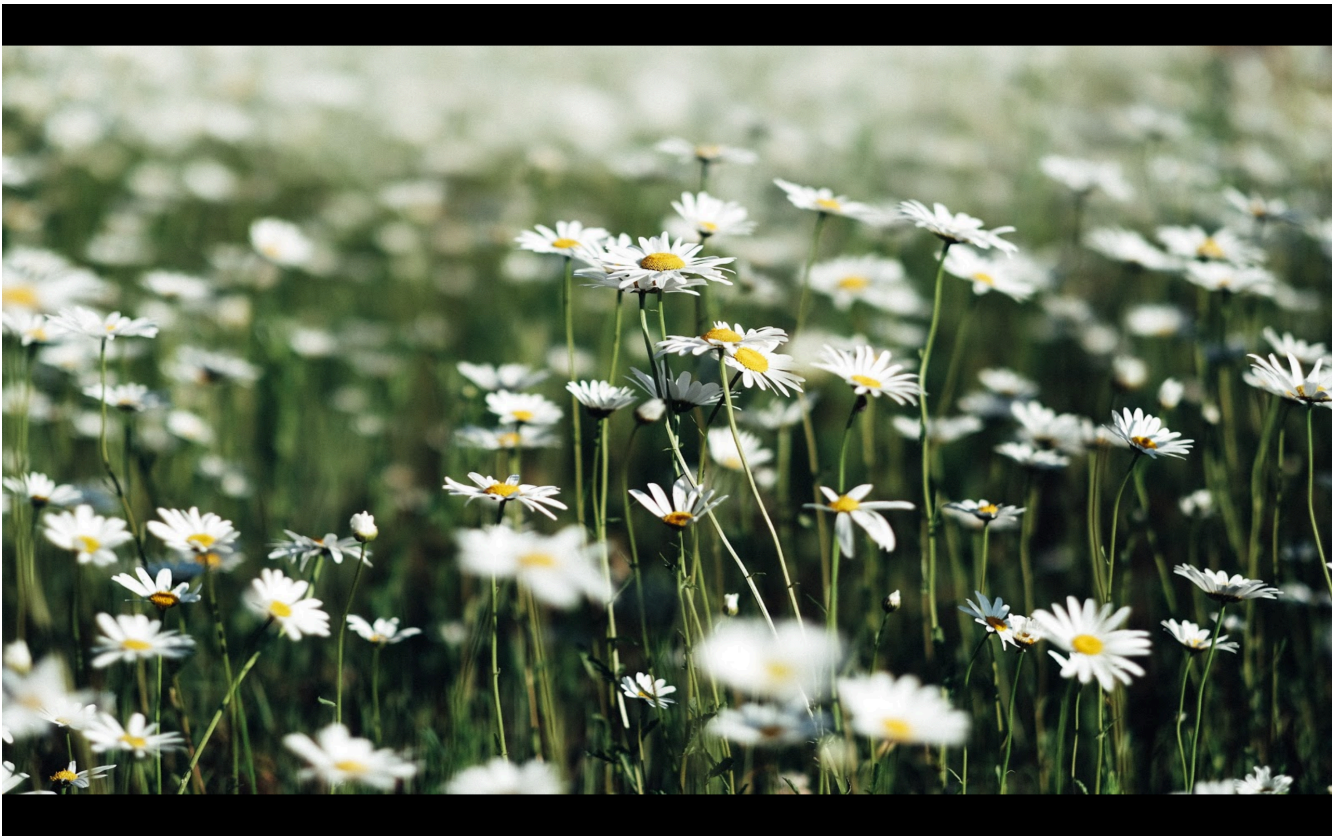
To bring this talk to a close, I want to let you know that today's open education movement is stronger than it has ever been, despite its broken parts. The diversity, number of folks involved, and sheer talent that is building in this community is mindblowing, and I think that we are finding the ways forward. But we must be ever-thoughtful. We must be vigilant in our efforts to be inclusive, and to provide safe spaces for newcomers and veterans in "open". We must remain critical about the structures, processes, and leadership in this movement. And above all else, we must remember that we are taking part in a human activity, one that is messy and beautiful and that I will never give up on.

Thank you.

About the Author

Billy Meinke-Lau is the Open Educational Resources (OER) Technologist for the University of Hawaiʻi, supporting a system-wide effort to leverage OER for student success, equity, and cost reduction. Billy completed an MEd in educational technology from UH Mānoa and worked for Creative Commons before taking his current leadership role with UH. He is also a doctoral student of Political Science, investigating the politics of collaborative scholarship in higher education. He lives in Honolulu with his family. You can find him on Twitter at [@billymeinke](https://twitter.com/billymeinke).

Attribution

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THE FUTURE OF THE PUBLIC MISSION OF UNIVERSITIES

Robin DeRosa

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Keynote for ["Making Knowledge Public,"](#) the 2018 President's Dream Colloquium at Simon Fraser University

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Katzie and Kwikwetlem peoples on whose traditional territories Simon Fraser's three campuses stand. And back home in the United States, today is the National Day of Mourning, and I would like to express solidarity with the Wampanoag and other indigenous communities who are marking the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the ongoing assault on Native culture.

I am grateful to be here to talk with you all today. I am focusing on the future of the public missions of universities, and I want to start with a deeply inspiring story about something I am sure you will all immediately recognize as being centrally important to this topic.

Parking meters.

Parking is inspirational.

In 2008, the city of Chicago, Illinois entered into an arrangement with a private vendor to manage the city parking meters. Deals like this seem to make sense. Instead of paying out scarce taxpayer dollars to fund expensive infrastructure, our communities contract with private investors in win-win arrangements that deliver both public infrastructure and private profit.

According to the *Chicago Sun Times,* Chicago Parking Meters LLC is a group that includes investors from as far away as the Middle East. These private investors who have already extracted $927 million from the deal, will recoup their full investment by 2021. *They will still have 62 years of cash-flow left to enjoy.* In the mean time, motorists in Chicago were so peeved about the radical increase in parking meter fees that they vandalized a bunch of parking meters; the city has to reimburse the investors for every parking meter that is out of service (including those at spots in use by disabled motorists who don't legally pay the parking fees). While motorists pay more for parking and the city absorbs the bumps, the weight of benefits increasingly skews away from the public and toward private profit. Chicago attorney Clint Krislov tried to get the parking meter deal declared illegal on grounds that you can't legally sell the public way. He said, "[This deal has] so chopped into the revenues the city rightly needs and should have to provide services to the people of Chicago. Like retiree health care. Like extra police. And [it keeps] on getting worse."

I like to think about parking and bridges and roads. As a scholar of early American literature, infrastructure

isn't something I was encouraged to think a lot about in my academic training. As I've come to work on the scholarship of teaching and learning, I've become more interested in what the roadways and paths that carry learning look like, and what they should look like. So I think more about infrastructure. Back to Illinois.

The Indiana Toll Road privatized, and for a decade, travelers enjoyed an efficient new roadway and reasonable fees. And then the honeymoon ended, and the concessionaire started extracting the full maintenance and operation costs by charging motorists double for tolls.

Public-private infrastructure: a win-win?

The same article that explains this drawback to privatization– the fact that investors will extract profits and this will cost the public– also explains privatization's up side:

> During President Donald Trump's recent visit to the Middle East, Saudi Arabia committed $20 billion to a new Blackstone infrastructure fund.

In 2017, the private equity firm Blackstone announced that it was creating a massive fund that would invest in United States infrastructure. The fund's largest backer was the government of Saudi Arabia, which agreed to kick in half of the $40 billion. This was all just over a year before journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed at the order of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The Trump administration has been resistant to believing reports from their own intelligence experts that the Saudi government was behind the murder

of Khashoggi. The Washington Post [explains](#) that the administration "wanted to cover for their allies in the Saudi government," but that relationship is less about political alliances than it is about a private investment deal. What seemed at one time to be an up side to privatization (a $20 billion payout to fund critically needed American infrastructure) now becomes more vexed, as our national response to a human rights crisis– one that has enormous political relevance to a country like mine whose democratic principles are being tested daily by our leadership– is tethered to how the money flows in [what Trump no doubt calls "a good deal."](#)

I know this talk is supposed to focus on the public mission of universities, but universities are not spaces that are separate from their contexts. I hope you will indulge me as I explore some of the ways that our publics are getting tangled with private profit across a number of sectors and spheres, so we can think about what that means for the changing shape of our learning communities. I particularly want to think about public infrastructure. Not so much the public goods, but the public flows; not so much *what* we own in common, but *how* we exist and own and interact as a commons. So that's why I started with transportation, which is such a salient metaphor for how we connect together as humans in a public network.

So let's hit the highway and drive down to Florida. In Pinellas County on the western coast, taxpayers rejected a 1¢ sales tax to pay for expanded bus and rail. And just two hours east of Pinellas County, public transit advocates in Altamonte Springs failed to garner enough support to create a public "FlexBus" system. Instead of their publicly-funded transit initiatives, both Florida communities ended up [partnering with Uber](#). And they're not the only ones. In the United States, Uber has public transit agreements with San Francisco, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Dallas, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and more. In New York, riders can use pre-tax dollars to carpool using Uber.

The Uberization of Public Transit

There are two things that concern me here. The first is semantic, and you know as a literature scholar, I believe that our words are powerful, not only representing but also constructing the material reality around us. So I get concerned when we call Uber-based transit partnerships "public." As Uber extracts its profits and riders are conveniently served, we may be willing to accept this deal as a win-win. But even a winning arrangement is not the same as public infrastructure, so the misleading rhetoric obscures the erosion of a public way of operating. To understand my second concern, we can look at the flash points where these new pseudo-public deals diverge from a truly public system. In Florida, for example, travelers need mobile phones in order to take advantage of the Uber-provided, publicly-subsidized rides. The city manager of Altamonte Springs went on record with this gem:

> Users will make the choice that's best for them. If they prefer to not have a smartphone that's the life they choose to live.

77% of Americans now own smartphones. I don't know what the percentage is Altamonte Springs, but I can pretty safely say that many people who do not have access to smartphones in Altamonte have not intentionally "unplugged" as a "lifestyle choice," and also that many people– especially young people, elderly people, and poor people– who do not own smartphones especially need access to public transportation. In 2016, nearly

9% of US households did not own a car. It's not hard to imagine the Venn diagram between smartphone ownership and car ownership. And this is where Uber and public buses or rail diverge. While Uber's model caters to the majority, a public system ideally attends as well to the vulnerable margins. While Ubers don't all have the capacity to pick up a passenger who uses a wheelchair, all city buses and trains are equipped to accommodate disabled passengers. At its best, a public is shaped by its inclusivity, and access is a core tenet of its infrastructure. The Uberized version, however, nails the robust market even as it occludes any public needs that erode profit. So I'm worried that our public infrastructures are starting to conform to markets in ways that muddy our public missions, and I am worried that this conformity is ultimately going to rob us of the ability to recognize what a public infrastructure would look like.

Public infrastructure is certainly changing shape. North American postal services, both in Canada and in the U.S., are a good illustration of this. On the one hand, far fewer letters are being sent, which erodes the market for one of the core services offered– as well as one key source of revenues. On the other hand, thanks in particular to Amazon, a booming online shopping industry means that more and more parcels are traveling through the post every day.

Amazon: Changing Markets, Changing Metaphors

In the parcel delivery service, however, Canada Post has many competitors, including UPS, Fedex, Canpar, Dynamex, plus Purolator, which– interestingly–Canada Post owns. One Canadian economics reporter argued

that it's time for Canada Post to privatize because "delivering clothes, books and electronics for Amazon hardly qualifies as an essential public service." It's interesting to see the existence of a public service like postal delivery being so directly tied private commerce, but Amazon is interesting in another way as well. Amazon isn't just an online retailer. It's *infrastructure*. Every time you "log in with Amazon" or "check out with Amazon," every time you research your purchases and decisions and surf the algorithms tied across your linked platforms, [Amazon is increasingly providing and commodifying the pathways we use to interact with our world and each other](#).

Amazon isn't stuff, it's systems

I think we need to spend more time thinking not about what products are being sold to us, but how our *ways of being* are slowly– maybe rapidly, actually– becoming points of profit for investors who aren't invested in, well, us.

Transportation, postal delivery, commerce. This is the infrastructure underneath daily living. In addition to how we travel, mail, and spend, there's also how we communicate. There is possibly no infrastructure more crucial to a community than its communication systems; sometimes it may even seem that community *is* communication. Both come from the Latin *communicare,* "to share." But these systems are privatizing as well. In 1990, the Alberta government began the process of privatizing Alberta Government Telephones. In 1991, [the province sold its remaining ownership interest](#) in AGT for $870 million.

Community is Communication

The win-win logic is again obvious, as ailing infrastructure would mean radical tax hikes if the public were to fund the up-front costs of improving technical structures that need to be kept current. And maybe it's hard to understand how such a sweeping privatization changes the shape of our communications and therefore of our communities. So let's look at one smaller example of how the privatization of communication has affected real people and their ability to cultivate their human connections.

Video visitation is when visitors can communicate with incarcerated prisoners over video feeds. Often video visitation happens when both the prisoner and the visitor are on site in the same building, but separated by many rooms and barriers. While video visitation has been around for a long time, it was usually clunky and sporadically located. Over the past decade, however, facilities have outsourced the systems to corporations, often as part of a package that includes phone services.

Video Visitation (Photo via Convict Soap Box)

As of 2014, according to a report by the nonprofit Prison Policy Initiative, over 500 jails and prisons in 43 states in the U.S. had adopted video visitation. In many cases, such as at one prison in Kansas, contracts with these private companies (here, Securus) require the total elimination of all face-to-face contact between prisoners and guests in order to make the video visitation– which carries a fee for visitors– more attractive. Sometimes local counties or governments get a kickback from these revenues: "10% of revenues commission to the county, but only if the number of paid video visits reached at least 8,000 for that month. If Securus grossed $2.6 million or more, the county's percentage rose to 20%."

The privatization of prison communication is part of a larger, more familiar prison privatization narrative. In 2018, 8.4% of prisoners in the United States were housed in private prisons. GEO Group, one of the two largest prison operators, was one of the few publicly traded companies to openly donate large sums to the Trump effort (GEO Group also built the New Brunswick Miramichi Youth Detention Center under contract with the provincial Department of Public Safety, then had its contract ended in the 1990s after public protests). While there are a numerous reasons we might be concerned about the privatization of prisons, one obvious example is the 2011 case of a U.S. judge who was *convicted* in a "cash for kids jail scheme": private prisons had paid him to dole out harsh sentences in order to maintain their prison population.

The privatization of our communication channels and the privatization of our prisons are related phenomena that subjugate both humanity and the public good to profit. In most cases, this happens not because the public wants to erode its communities, but because the sales pitch offered by private industry is seductive, and it delivers. When roads crumble, private industry can repair them quickly. When you're stranded in the rain, private industry can get pick you up. When you need to make a call or house a prisoner, private industry can build a shiny box that serves its purpose. But the dark side is deeply ironic. The road is smooth, but the tolls are high.

Michigan law allows any private property owner to withdraw water from the aquifer under their property. One of Nestle's key bottling plants is in Michigan, just 120 miles from Flint, which suffered a colossal drinking water pollution crisis in 2014. Many residents in Flint are still drinking bottled water (though the schools have been retrofitted with water filtration systems courtesy of a private donation from billionaire submarine failure Elon Musk). And what heartbreaking irony is it that much of that bottled water has been extracted from the public aquifer just down the road, packaged by Nestle, and then sold back to the public at outrageous markup? For this privilege, Nestle pays Michigan a $200 a year paperwork fee, and nothing at all for the water.

Photo of @LittleMissFlint

The government tells Flint residents that the tap water is safe to drink, but many residents don't believe it because that's been said too many times when it wasn't true. The water issue in Flint is about aging public infrastructure: lead pipes that caused the contamination and water treatment that didn't correct the problem. It's about environmental racism and which problems get attended to by those with the power and money to fix them. And it's about public trust, since the initial foul water scandal is only one aspect of ongoing betrayals in Flint. When we see public breakdowns like Flint, and the clean Nestle water ready to ship out, we might ask where we draw the lines between the products we want and the services we need in order to live a human life? Is water public infrastructure? Is air? Is education?

So I know it took a while to come around to it, but when I turn to a conversation about knowledge and education, I want to see it as part of a larger conversation about how our publics are privatizing. Because I think when we see our own work in higher education as part of a larger ecosystem, there is both more urgency and more hope about how our own interventions in our micro contexts could have larger impact. I'll start the conversation about education in New Orleans, Louisiana. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, public schools in New Orleans were decimated. To rebuild them must have seemed like an overwhelming task. The hurricane coincided with the rising charter school movement in the United States, and when New Orleans needed to

rebuild its public schools, it was charters– and their complex public-in-name-private-in-operation character– that emerged as the preferred model:

> The post-Katrina charter system doesn't drain money from the 'regular' school system. In New Orleans, there is no other system.

Hurricane Katrina (Photo by Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

The schools were rebuilt under the charter model, but big changes were in store. Some of these were more particularly insidious. Of the 4,300 teachers dismissed after Katrina, 71% percent were Black. Because charter schools are often governed by free market principles, a focus on equity and social justice can be seen as an impediment to success. Jitu Brown, of Journey4Justice Alliance, a coalition of groups from Black and Brown communities impacted by charter schools, puts it this way:

> It's the colonizing of our communities, where we have people running the quality-of-life institutions in our communities through the way they see us, through their lens... If charters were so great, white folks would have them, but they don't get charters. They get magnet schools and well-funded neighborhood schools.

And the research bears out the idea that privatization has devastating effects on vulnerable populations. In 2018, the United Nations released a report on extreme poverty and human rights:

privatization often involves the systematic elimination of human rights protections and further marginalization of the interests of low-income earners and those living in poverty. Existing human rights accountability mechanisms are clearly inadequate for dealing with the challenges presented by large-scale and widespread privatization. Human rights proponents need to fundamentally reconsider their approach.
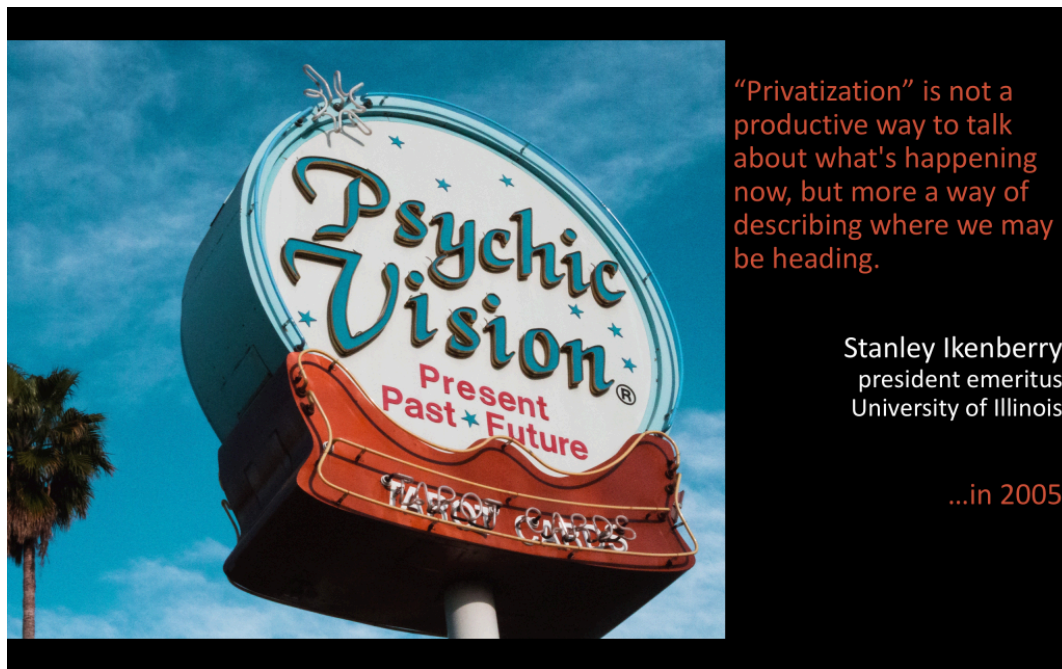

...further marginalization of those living in poverty...

The charter issue illuminates one of the more challenging questions about public education: what is a public school? Governed by private organizations, charters still call themselves public. But, as education professor David Labaree notes, don't some "private schools...enroll students using public vouchers or tax credits, [and some] public schools...use exams to restrict access? For that matter, don't private schools often serve public interests, and don't public schools often promote students' private interests?" How much of the definition of a public institution is based on its funding sources? And how much is based on its mission?

In 2005, scholars and analysts in the United States and Canada were becoming increasingly concerned about the privatization of education, especially higher education.

University of Illinois president Stanley Ikenberry rejected "privatization" as an accurate term (in 2005) to describe the current conditions for higher ed in the U.S., but he wondered if the term would one day be appropriate. That same year, Canadian sociologist Claire Polster warned of five kinds of privatization that were beginning to shape Canada's colleges and universities:

1. increasing reliance on tuition
2. adoption of business values and practices
3. research for hire
4. rise of corporate-leaning advisory bodies
5. innovation centers tied to intellectual property aimed at private profit

Just to spend a moment on the first kind of privatization there, Polster noted that between 1990-91 and 2000-2001, tuition fees in Canada rose by 126%, while average student debts rose from about $8,700 to $25,000. This was because students were paying a far larger share of the costs of postsecondary education, from an average of 17% of operating costs in 1992 to 28% of operating costs in 2002. Depending on the province in terms of severity, we can see that the rising personal tuition end debt burdens have continued to plague Canadian students and their families since 2005. And of course, in the United States, the tuition and debt burdens have become front page news, where outstanding student debt reached $1.5 trillion in the first quarter of 2018. My public university in New Hampshire is about 9% funded by the government; the rest is paid for by students through tuition.

In terms of making visible the move from public to private funding, there's no better visible example of the shift than GoFundMe. In the United States, in the last 3 years, more than 130,000 people have raised $60

million to pay for their college tuition and related expenses. [To take Ohio as an example](#), public colleges had the most GoFundMe requests:

- 527 from Ohio University
- 409 from Kent State
- 298 from Ohio State
- 286 from University of Akron
- 143 from Cleveland State

In 2017, the [Thurgood Marshall College Fund announced a formal partnership with GoFundMe](#) to raise money in support of students attending the nation's forty-seven public historically black colleges. And a senior at a Baltimore, Maryland public high school [launched a GoFundMe campaign](#) and raised more than $80,000 to bring *heat* to her freezing school buildings. Students are increasingly carrying the burden for covering our school's operating costs.

While tuition burdens are the most deeply-felt repercussion of privatization from a student standpoint, those of us who work in education see the effects of the shift from public infrastructure to private outsourcing across diverse sectors of our daily work lives. In higher education, our administrators play a dangerous game of mourning the decline of public support while resignedly accepting the new corporate model that reigns supreme even in our public colleges and universities. "We must change our perspective of being a pure public university, one that is supported mostly by the state, to a university that is privatized," [said Bob Davies, Former President of Murray State University](#), "Yes, we are a public university, yes we hold public university values and ideas, but we are becoming privatized."

Before we talk about the effects on teaching and learning and knowledge, let's pause to look at some of the auxiliary services that are increasingly being outsourced to private companies.

The student health center was renovated to include student-centered accessories, including skateboard racks, computer access during waiting times, a self-help center and televisions in the waiting area. A 24-hour-a-day nurse line was made available to students.

*"Privatizing health services was new, but the handwriting was on the wall."*

"Privatizing health services was new, but the handwriting was on the wall."

Radford University is one of many, many institutions outsourcing its health care to a private company. We can see the diction that describes the change pointing towards a customer-service model, where TVs and skateboard racks become part of a new vision of students as consumers, who exercise choice in their college enrollments and therefore need to be wooed by the lazy river model of even basic health services. And colleges and universities feel stuck, unable to upgrade facilities when their budgets are constrained by legislatively-imposed austerity. A similar thing happens in dining, where the diction of local foods and community tables is co-opted by large national and multi-national corporations who now provide college dining services. This example is from the University of Kentucky, who contracted out its services; their new $32 million dining building is part of a 15-year, nearly $250 million partnership between the university and Aramark, a global leader in food services:

*Champions Kitchen is more than just a dining hall,
it is a place for people to come together to break bread.
With its open concept kitchen,
you'll be sure you're getting the freshest local ingredients.*

Local foods or multinational corporation?
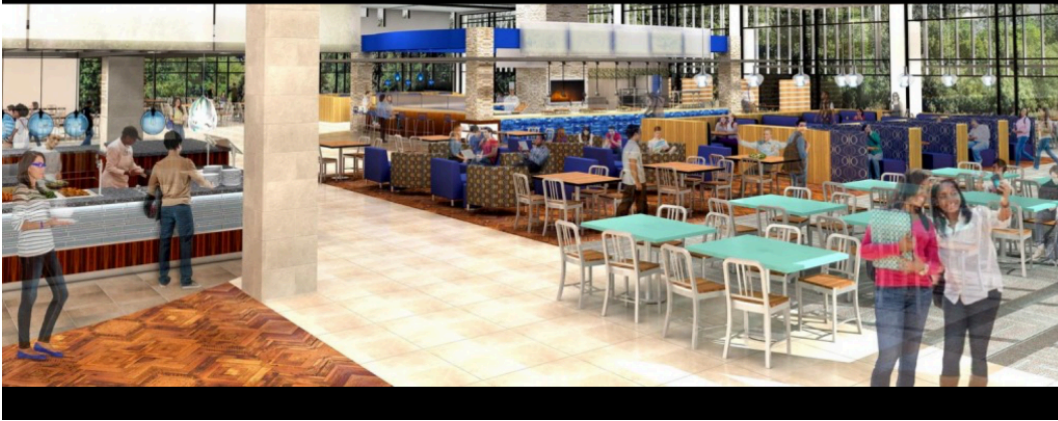
Administrators and faculty often see outsourcing as a welcome way to relieve budgets and burdens. In 2012, private investors paid $483 million to Ohio State University for a lease to operate university parking; an accounting [professor emphasized the benefits](#) of the agreement:

> Our core strength as a university is not running parking facilities. So we should focus on what we're really good at and hire others to do what they're really good at.

This would suggest that the slip to outsource is only in those domains that are outside of our academic missions. But this is far from true. Online Program Management (OPM) "providers" or "enablers" help to run online programs for colleges and universities. This can include everything from providing platform infrastructure to creating courses and training faculty to teach them. As far back as 2015, the OPM [market value was estimated in the United States at $1.1 billion](#). In 2017, over 70% of the institutions that provided a response to a [Century Foundation's survey](#) request—84 out of 117—contracted with at least one for-profit OPM to facilitate their online programming. Here's what [Pearson advertises](#) as the benefits of contracting with them for OPM:

Financial Benefits

Growth: Strengthen your financial outlook by creating in-demand and highly sought after degree programs.

Risk-reduction: Reduce your risk by allowing us to make the upfront investment. We only succeed when you do.

Comprehensive: From marketing to recruitment, course development and more, you can expect a comprehensive approach.

Flexibility: Tap into our vast resources to adapt quickly and effectively to changes in the online environment (i.e., quickly ramping up new online programs to respond to market changes).

Academic Benefits

Outcomes: Programs launched by Pearson have been market-tested and proven to be in demand by the labor market and prospective learners.

Rankings: Improve your rankings by elevating your brand regionally and nationally.

Support: Faculty are integral to the online growth process. We help with the transition and support their passion for teaching with a state-of-the art, student-centered learning delivery model.

Reputation: Successful online programs not only create market awareness, but also a strong network of alumni who are eager to give back.

...those academic benefits are still pretty market-based...

The fact that OPM can put profit-driven corporations in key positions of control with respect to academic content and pedagogy in concerning, but equally as concerning is how unaware students and their families are of how this all works. Michigan State University provides an example of how OPMs operate behind the scenes. The landing page for the University's online executive development programs features the University's logo and a picture from inside the school's Broad College of Business. 'Lead Like a Spartan,' reads a banner on the program's website. Perusing the information available to potential students, there is no indication that an external contractor provides recruitment and marketing services, as well as course production and instructional design for many of the programs rather than the university itself or that, for each dollar these programs bring in as revenue, more than half goes to that contractor. (Mattes)
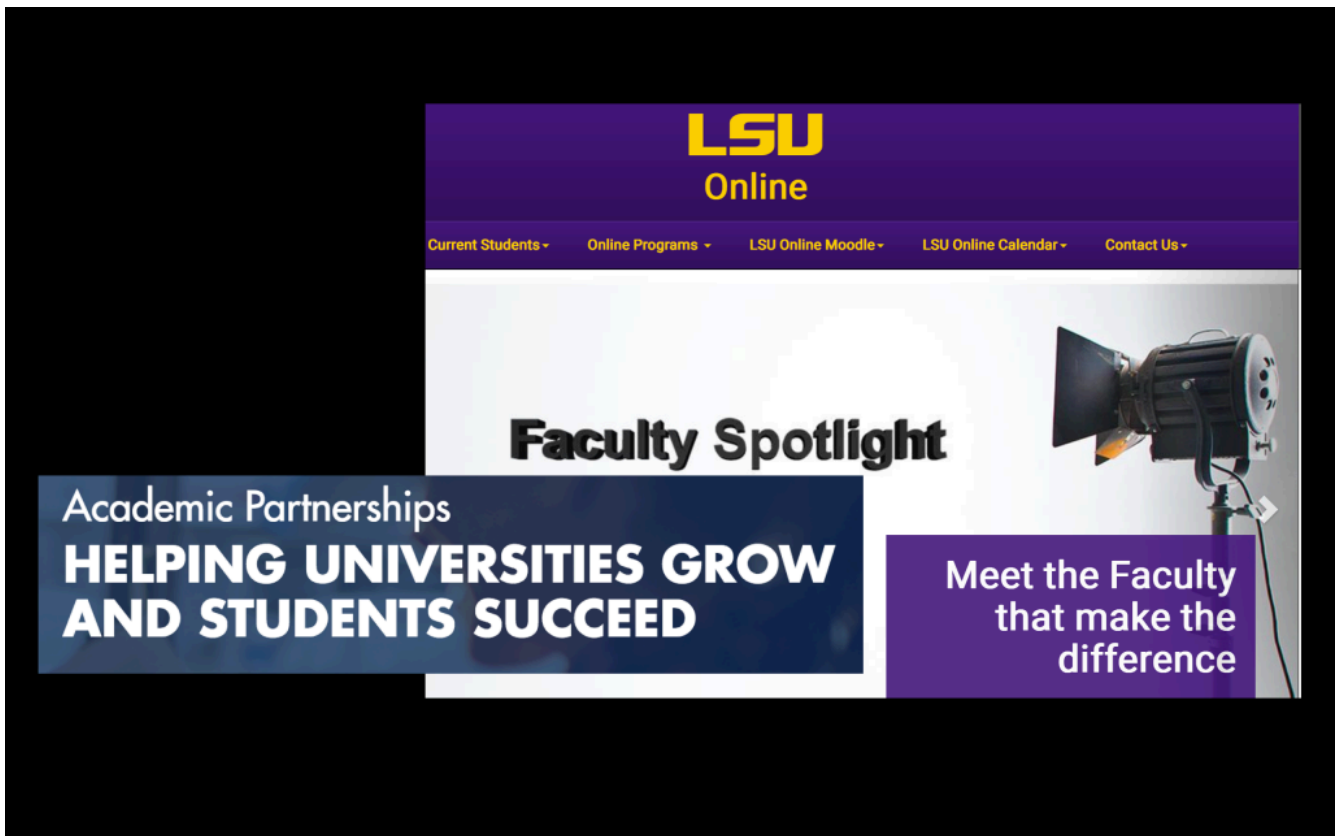
What students don't know about who runs their online curriculum

Louisiana State University's agreement with Academic Partnerships goes so far as to explicitly request that marketing materials created by the OPM blend in with LSU's regular branding; students would not have any reason to assume that the OPM content and delivery was not entirely managed within the university itself.

OPM includes the wrap-around advertising apparatus to draw students into the programs, since so many of our online investments are driven by a frenzied belief in enrollment-based ROI. But this ends up making the data generated by students' interactions with the OPM platforms and interfaces extremely valuable to those companies. And the contracts that OPM corporations design often include clauses that allow them to extract that data to use to enrich their own profits. 2U paid the University of California-Berkeley $4.2 million in 2014 for the permission to ask applicants, including those who were denied entry into the Berkeley program, if they would like to learn more about another, similar program offered by 2U and Southern Methodist University (Mattes). And here's a clause from a contract between Bisk and the University of Vermont:

> The University of Vermont (UVM) agrees that Bisk shall have the right to market and advertise UVM programs together with other university programs through and with the University Alliance, a Bisk brand, and therefore UVM understands and agrees that Programs students and prospects may be provided with information on other University Alliance offerings. (Mattes)
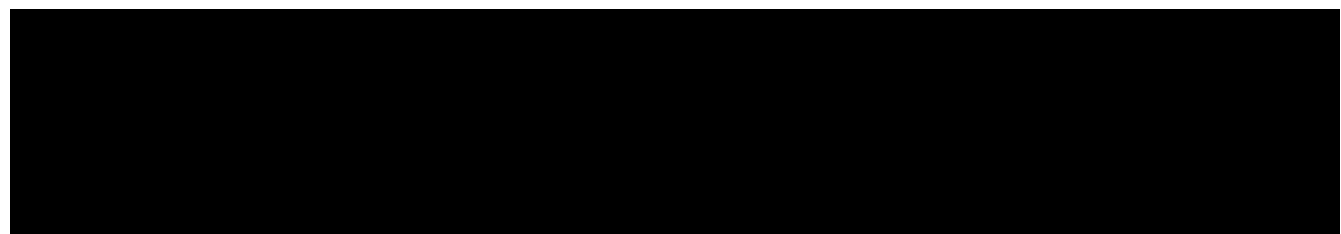
2U, Bisk, and Your Public University

It's hard to see this all as anything other than a profit-driven attempt to commodify education, consumerize students, monetize data, manipulate algorithms and shift teaching and learning into an enterprise.

The backdrop for the rise of OPM is a fully corporatizing university space. As public funding retracts and auxiliary outsourcing expands, universities play a dangerous game with private industry. Joshua Hunt's recent book, *The University of Nike,* tells the disturbing story of how declines in state support for higher education in Oregon in the mid-to-late 1990's provided the perfect pressurized environment for the flourishing of a robust donor relationship between the University of Oregon and alum and chief Nike executive Phil Knight. The book illustrates the disturbingly active role that Knight and Nike played in university operations. Within a few years of Knight's first $27 million gift (to fund a university library in 1994), "Nike was calling the shots" on campus, with "Nike employees...consulting on various projects alongside university employees."
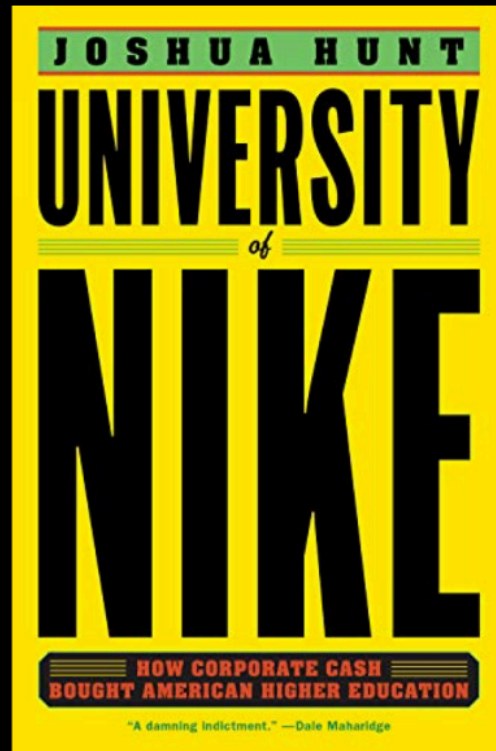
"Nike was now calling the shots"

For those of us who work at universities not lucky enough to be shadow-controlled by Phil Knight, we might experience this corporate lean in a way that seems to be more connected to regional community needs. "Workforce partnerships," where local industries help fund facilities and curriculum development in high-need labor markets, are designed to meet needs for both the markets and for students who will be graduating into them and who hope to be employed (not incidentally, so they can pay off their student loans). It's another of the win-wins. But what is the long game here, from a public good perspective? If an institution takes on– for no compensation– the training of entry-level employees for an industry, what reason is there for that industry to retain or promote those employees as the field develops and changes, since they have a neverending pipeline of newly trained, less expensive young employees at the ready?

Sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom tackles this in her groundbreaking book, *Lower Ed.* McMillan Cottom argues that we now think of college as an individual good, rather than a collective good that benefits society, which helps explain the credentializing craze that encourages learners to gird themselves against a rough labor market by accumulating certificates and degrees. She links the recent rise of for-profit colleges to our growing national aversion to public responses to labor market crises. When we have "skills gaps," under- or unemployment, demographic shifts that affect industry, outsourcing and automation trends– when we have any challenge that confronts our students upon graduation, we solve these problems by asking industry what

it needs to feel better. But what industry needs and what our students and communities need may not always be the same thing.
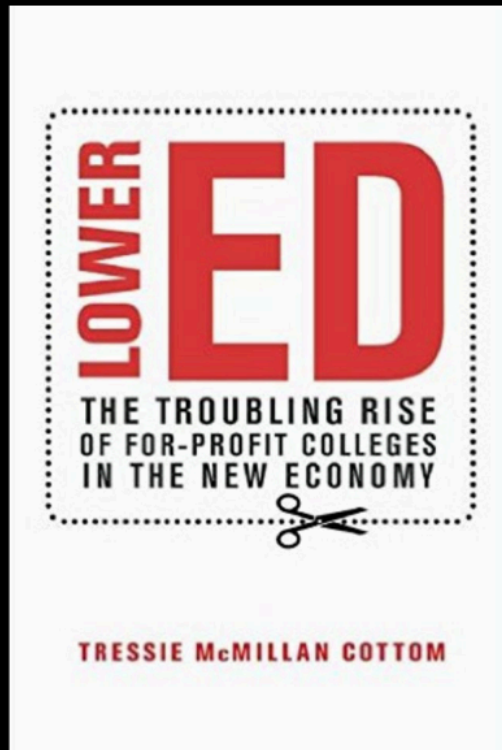
We now think of a college education as an individual rather than collective good.

I think one of the best books for understand what happens when we place our faith in private markets to pull public higher education out of its crisis is Christopher Newfield's *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them.* Newfield argues that private sector "reforms" are not the cure for the college cost disease– they *are* the college cost disease; they set up a *devolutionary cycle* that shifts resources away from education while raising rather than containing costs.

Figure 1. The Devolutionary Cycle
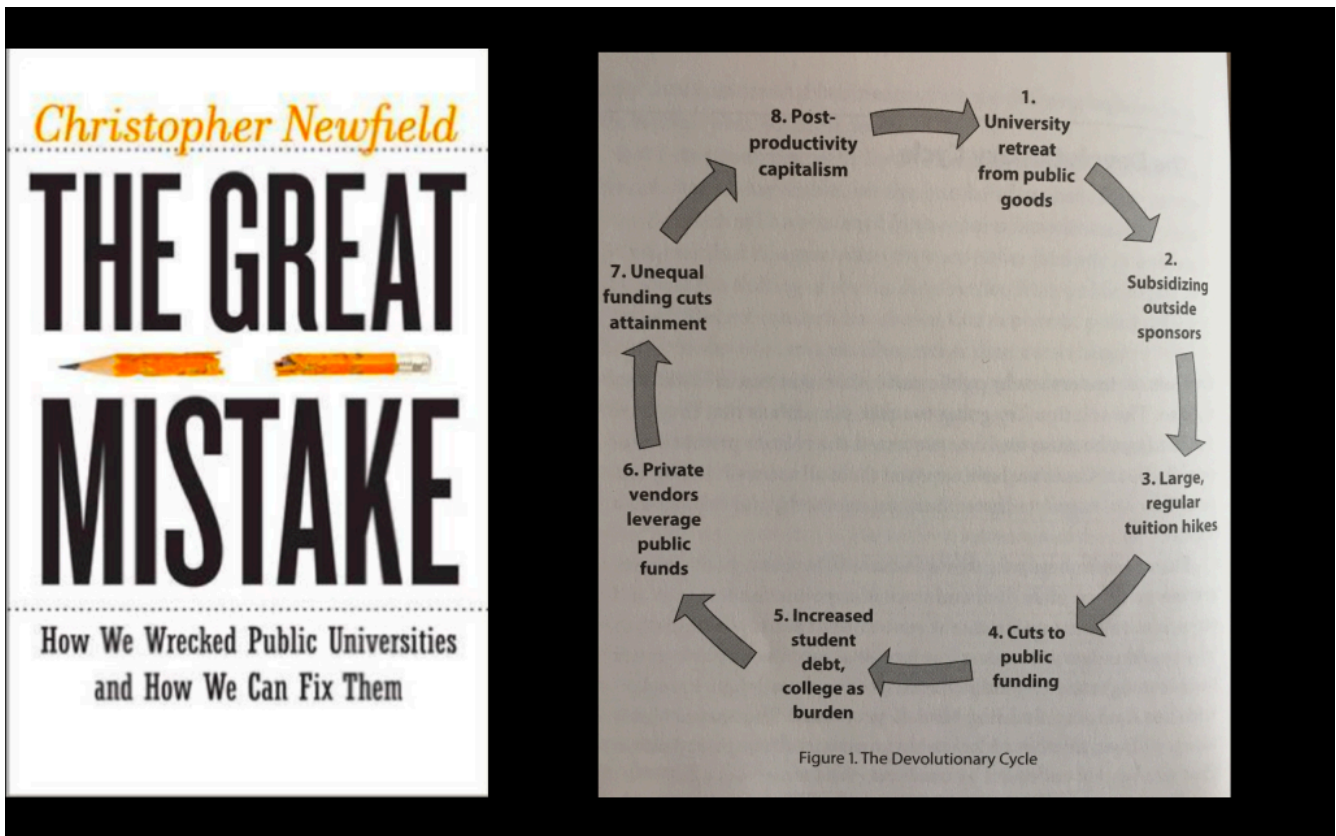
The Devolutionary Cycle

We can see so many of the privatizing trends I've talked about represented in this cycle, from outsourcing to tuition hikes to the shift to private OPM vendors. What's stunning about Newfield's work, though, is how he sifts through the fallout in specific public colleges and universities to trace the negative impact that this privatizing turn has had on bottom-line revenues. In other words, regardless of what you think about the effect on teaching and learning, the other dirty little fact is that privatizing doesn't even fix the myopic problems it seeks to solve.

Newfield wants those of us inside public higher education to reclaim our public missions. In the final part of this talk, I want to articulate what that might look like. What does it mean to resist the trends as I've outlined them here, and instead focus our colleges and universities on teaching, learning, and research for the public good?

We started by talking about the Uberization of public transportation, but I also want to suggest that private industry does not corner the market on innovation. Take RideAustin, for example. When it first rejected Uber's request to operate within its city limits, Austin knew there were transportation needs that its current public infrastructure was not meeting. RideAustin is a public version of an Uber-type system, but it has critical differences. Part of its stated mission is "doing right by drivers, ensuring a fair wage, doing right by the community." And RideAustin leadership states that they "want to make transportation more accessible for

everyone in the Austin area." RideAustin donates to local charities as part of its structural operations, offers free rides for doctor visits for those in needs, abides by city regulations, and (in stark contrast to Uber) makes its operational data public.

Public transportation "innovates"

RideAustin is no panacea for anything, but it is a public response to a need, a response that returns its revenues back into the public ecosystem, and that centers access ahead of profit. I wonder how public higher education can resist Uberization, and innovate around principles that truly sustain our public ecosystems for learning and research.

    I don't study any of this stuff for a living. I teach for a living. Through my teaching, I have come to care deeply about making education more accessible for more of my current and potential future students. When former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, the 11th richest person in the world, announced last week that he was giving $1.8 billion to Johns Hopkins University, I shuddered, wondering how someone who'd once governed the city could imagine that one of the richest private universities in the world– with an endowment already topping $3 billion– would be a better choice to receive this gift than the City University of New York, which enrolls a quarter million learners and has one of the most diverse student bodies in the United States. And then, after that shudder, I shuddered *again* to think that the best option I could imagine for CUNY was

that a rich philanthropist would decide it was politically expedient for him to donate money to support the school.

If you think I'm about to tell you how we generate $1.8 billion through public sources without alienating our tax base, sorry. But I am going to suggest that we need to start building evidence and a vocabulary for the value of our public work. *It's ridiculous to assume that it's not a case that we can effectively make.* Even in purely economic terms, there is substantial evidence that when taxpayers invest in public higher education, the financial rewards that are returned directly to them far outweigh their costs.

Philip Trostel at the University of Maine released fantastic [research funded by the Lumina Foundation](#) in 2015. He quantified the rate of return on taxpayer investment in college students at 10.3%, and the rate of return to state and local governments at 3.1%. The fact that we think higher education is expensive for taxpayers and municipalities has nothing to do with math and everything to do with political rhetoric that protects the richest members of society– like Bloomberg– from paying a fair share. The spin is carefully orchestrated by a small percentage of wealthy folks protecting their interests, and we need to unspin it.

Interestingly, Trostel's report is titled "It's Not Just the Money." He details in its pages how we also undervalue benefits that go beyond the simple math of earnings. We all benefit from public higher education in private and public ways, in ways tied to markets and ways that aren't directly tied to markets. For example, the College Earnings Premium (CEP) is well documented. Trostel calculates that individual college graduates earn an average of 114% more than they would if they did not have a college degree. But focusing only on those private market benefits obscures other equally amazing benefits.

THE COLLEGE EARNINGS PREMIUM IS 114% HIGHER
ONLY ONE PART OF THE STORY

PRIVATE BENEFITS:
- ↑ EMPLOYMENT FRINGE BENEFITS
- ↓ UNEMPLOYMENT
- ↑ HEALTH
- ↓ DISABILITY
- ↓ IMPRISONMENT
- ↑ LIFE SATISFACTION
- BETTER MARRIAGE
- 25% ↓ MORTALITY RATE
- LIFE EXPECTANCY ↑ FROM 74 TO 81

PARTIALLY PASSED TO CHILDREN!

EXTERNAL BENEFITS
- PRODUCTIVITY SPILLOVER IN REGIONAL INCOME
- GREATER CEP MEANS GREATER TAX REVENUES
- REDUCTION OF NEED FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
- LOWERED CRIME AND REDUCTION IN DOLLAR VALUE OF HARM TO CRIME VICTIMS

Philip Trostel

Benefits Beyond CEP

Don't tell me these are not persuasive. Live seven years longer!! Why don't we talk about these? Why do we run so quickly to industry partnerships and private donors when the public power of education is so clearly valuable?

I'd like to argue that every single faculty and staff member, beyond just our leadership, needs to become versed in value of what we do. And then we need to tie the mission of public access and public investment to the actual work that we do in designing our courses and programs. This is the main reason I have come to open.
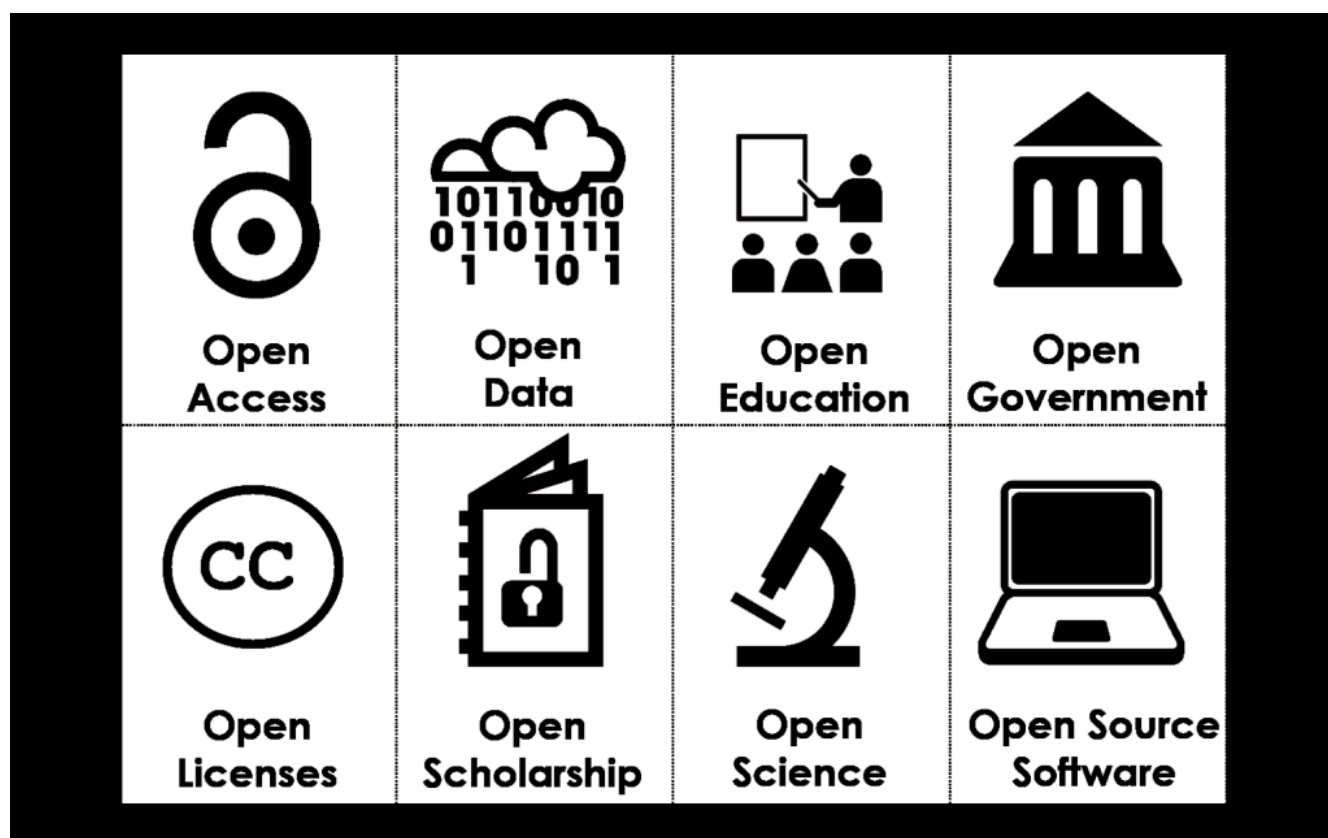
Ecosystems, Not Solutions (image by Abby Clobridge)

As I conceive of it, open is an ecosystem, made up of many related aspects. I could talk about all of them here, but really my focus is on open education, particularly open access, open educational resources, and open pedagogy.

Open Access to Research

Public colleges and universities should have public funding to conduct research, and the results of that research should not be paywalled so that the public has to pay twice. Our libraries need to enter into consortia to flip to open access journals and resist the publishing conglomerates that bundle journals into exorbitantly priced units that students pay for through their tuition dollars. Faculty need to pass open access resolutions and support the publication of open access research in promotion and tenure processes, and we need to focus on peer review systems that offer strong quality control measures in our OA publications. If every public college and university– all of our librarians, all of our faculty, all of our administrators– committed to this and worked on it for a year, we'd simply do it. Open Access matters because the profit motive is problematic for the growth of knowledge. Take a recent kerfluffle with the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology,* where an article critical about how some doctors were being recruited by companies to promote medical practices that enriched

those companies was taken off the journal's website eight days after publication due to pressure from private industry. As a skin cancer patient, believe me when I say I don't want anyone with a profit motive driving the publication mechanisms of dermatological research. And a taxpayer who funds autism research should have the opportunity to read an article about new treatments that could help her autistic son, even if she has no institutional access to a library database. Open Access isn't just weaning off Elsevier. It's a broader commitment to the integrity of our research, the free flow of ideas, and the belief that our work can and should matter in the world outside the academy.

Open Educational Resources

We should convert all textbooks, all materials made expressly for teaching, to open educational resources. We should fund their creation robustly, and fund their updating. We should partner across institutions to do it. If all faculty committed to adopting OER and creating more to fill in the gaps, and all administrators committed to directing funds to this work, we could do this in a year. We could just do it. OER matters not because textbooks matter. OER matters because it highlights an example of how something central to our public missions, the transfer of our foundational disciplinary knowledge from one generation of scholars to the next, has been co-opted by private profit. And OER is not a solution, but a systemic shift from private to public architecture in how we deliver learning.

Open Pedagogy

Open pedagogy is way of thinking about teaching and learning that foregrounds access, commons-oriented approaches to sharing knowledge, and connections inside of and between communities. On the ground in my courses, this can look lots of ways. It's in my *Open Anthology of Earlier American Literature,* co-written with my students. It's in my students' ePorts, where they contribute their research and ideas back into the worldwide web instead of just being perpetual consumers of knowledge. It's in openly licensing the materials I create for teaching, and in calling in collaborators instead of calling out competitors across sister institutions.

But whether it's about how we research and publish, how we transmit information, how we teach and learn, open is most centrally about designing infrastructure from the perspective of our publics. This is not about openly licensing any one particular artifact. This is not about saving students $100 on a textbook here or there. This is about taking a stand for an ecosystem powered by infrastructure that actively strengthens the public good. I know that the "public good" is not easy to qualify; and hell, it's even harder to quantify. But we know what privatization looks like, and we know that gated communities sequester and starve knowledge growth, and we know what public returns look like.

My plea today is that we build an international commitment to the value and language of public. That we create open ecosystems in government, data, science, research, education, and software that are contextual, tied to community need, and reflective of the diversity of the real people who depend on our universities to do good work and improve the condition of the world. Don't tell me we've already lost. We haven't given this a

real go yet. I want to hear this from every level of our colleges. Faculty in physics and ceramics and machining and occupational therapy. Writing center tutors. Facilities and maintenance staff, deans and provosts, student activities planners, administrative assistants and instructional designers and technologists. Presidents. All of us, we all have to look at the area that we work in and ask:

what is slipping towards the private here? what would public infrastructure look like to do this work? what language do I need to describe a public vision for this future? what public value does this work deliver? how does this work strengthen a larger public good? how can public resources be sewn and grown to sustain a lasting and verdant ecosystem for education?

What value does public space have?

Why do we need public spaces for learning?

What does it look like to create and sustain a public space?

Don't tell me it can't be done. Look around. It's us. Why not?

Squatters defy eviction for 2 decades, & flip building to public housing. (Photo from Amy Starecheski via 99percentinvisible.org)

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Robin DeRosa is the director of the Open Learning & Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. She is an internationally recognized leader in open pedagogy and an advocate for public higher education in the United States. She can be found at her website, www.robinderosa.net, or on Twitter @actualham.

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THE TYRANNY OF "CLEAR" THINKING

Jess Mitchell

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A Reflection on the Ways we Train our Brains: An Ode to our Over-fondness for Data

We live in a complex world, made up of complex systems we often don't understand (and sometimes cannot even fathom). The complex systems that baffle us aren't just the global ones like space exploration, global economic dynamics, weather science, or our city's trash and recycling programs. We are equally baffled by more 'local' systems like the digital parking meter, the wifi router in our home, the smoke alarm in our house (How can I turn it off?! What is it trying to tell me?! Why won't it work?! Did it work? Did it store my information for later? Did it put me at risk?). As the line between complex global and local collapses, our bafflement has deep consequences. As [Donella Meadows "Thinking in Systems"](#) tells us,

> "there are no separate systems. The world is a continuum. Where to draw a boundary around a system depends on the purpose of the discussion — the questions we want to ask."

The complexity is dizzying and the expectation that we be able to use these, digital, well-intentioned 'intuitive' interfaces and affordances without hesitation, fear, or difficulty, is only increasing. We are an optimistic bunch though... we believe the *next* iPhone or Samsung Galaxy (or the not-yet-invented-thing) will make sense of online banking and password storage, FINALLY. The *next new thing* will help users understand their privacy rights and risks in a way that gives them agency and puts them in charge! The next technological innovation will fundamentally transform education, business, and life! <sigh> It's exhausting. It's illusive. It's always just-out-of-reach (hint, we keep [moving the goalpost](#), thus perpetually making it out of reach). We keep running and we call it innovation and progress. As Shawn Achor says, "we've pushed happiness [success, completion] over the cognitive horizon," so it will always be just out of reach. Why are we running? What are we running from? What are we running toward?

The knowable as Hot Cocoa (mm mm Predictability)

We like certainty, completeness, simplicity, we like knowing. We approach the world with a transactional, checkbook accounting expectation — if we document our inputs and note our outputs, it should all reconcile neatly in the end. If I eat a healthy diet, if I exercise, if I sleep well, if I do all the things the doctor recommended, then I should know my outcome will be good health. If I memorize all the things the professor said, then I should get a good score on the exam.

As a result, our institutions have adapted to contend with this fundamentally flawed, oversimplified causal thinking. For example, medicine contends with a patient that thinks a visit to the doctor should result in a tangible something, a new prescription, a referral, a plan; and education contends with a student who thinks that if she does everything the syllabus says, then she deserves an A (she's done her part of the contract, she has learned).

The Causal Mind

Our causal mind kicks in and we become entitled to B simply because we have done A. We struggle with the breakdown in this causal thinking — how can it possibly be the case that what I expected (what I was promised!) didn't happen?! (When Bad Things Happen to Good People). Clearly, if I do A, it should result in B! How else can we know what to expect in the world? How else can we be sentient beings in an understandable universe? And if B doesn't result from A, then it must mean we just didn't measure right— we didn't collect enough data (when the algorithm fails we say it just needs to learn more — we grant algorithms more fallibility than we do people; for example, self-driving cars). But once you've built it, you're invested in it.

> You can't just set up an elaborate surveillance infrastructure and then decide to ignore it. These data pipelines take on an institutional life of their own, and it doesn't help that people speak of the "data driven organization" with the same religious fervor as a "Christ-centered life".
>
> The data mindset is good for some questions, but completely inadequate for others. But try arguing that with someone who insists on seeing the numbers. The promise is that enough data will give you insight. Retain data indefinitely, maybe waterboard it a little, and it will spill all its secrets.
>
> There's a little bit of a con going on here. On the data side, they tell you to collect all the data you can, because they have magic algorithms to help you make sense of it. On the algorithms side, where I live, they tell us not to worry too much about our models, because they have magical data. We can train on it without caring how the process works. The data collectors put their faith in the algorithms, and the programmers put their faith in the data.
>
> At no point in this process is there any understanding, or wisdom. There's not even domain knowledge. Data science is the universal answer, no matter the question. (Maciej Ceglowski 8:20) "Haunted by Data"

We behave as though with enough data, all is knowable, measurable and predictable. And with that as our

foundation, it begins to crack. These foundation cracks can be seen in every domain, especially, perhaps, in education...

> These are the tools of accountants and have nothing to do with larger visions or questions about what matters as part of a university education. The overreliance on metrics and measurement has become a tool used to remove questions of responsibility, morality, and justice from the language and policies of education. I believe the neoliberal toolkit as you put it is part of the discourse of civic illiteracy that now runs rampant in higher educational research, a kind of mind-numbing investment in a metric-based culture that kills the imagination and wages an assault on what it means to be critical, thoughtful, daring, and willing to take risks. Metrics in the service of an audit culture has become the new face of a culture of positivism, a kind of empirical-based panopticon that turns ideas into numbers and the creative impulse into ashes. Large scale assessments and quantitative data are the driving mechanisms in which everything is absorbed into the culture of business. The distinction between information and knowledge has become irrelevant in this model and anything that cannot be captured by numbers is treated with disdain. In this new audit panopticon, the only knowledge that matters is that which can be measured. Henry Giroux "The Language of Neoliberal Education"

When information is more important than knowledge, and certainty and measurability are more important than thoughtfulness, risk, wonder, exploration and discovery, what do we lose? What are we relinquishing? If to value something we have to be able to measure it and vice versa, what are we overlooking and missing? What is the byproduct, the sawdust or waste that is created by our need to have neat, simple, exact corners (in education, in business, and beyond)?

When measurability is success, it becomes an end in itself. We begin asking questions that lead us to measurable answers. We begin measuring those things that are easily measured. And those are not neutral acts. We act on our measurements — data becomes the tea leaves for decision-making, the map for change, the path toward advancement (data-driven decision-making in Education). And we feel a sense of comfort having followed the directions given to us from the disembodied data.

> What you really want is to be **reality-driven**, where data is often an idealistic proxy for reality... building up highly quantified evaluation methods that are powered almost entirely by subjective, qualitative assessments of data. You're not eliminating subjective decision making — you're just obfuscating [sic] it behind a layer of numbers that make everything feel less random. Nate Sullivan "Why OKRs Kind of Suck"

The key here is that it "feels" less random; the reality is that it often isn't. But this absolves us of the feeling that we are making decisions that aren't justified, validated, or warranted by some higher power — in this case the power of data collection and its revelations.

> Pay Attention to What Is Important, Not Just What Is Quantifiable. Our culture, obsessed with numbers, has given us the idea that what we can measure is more important than what we can't measure. Think about that for a minute. It means that we make quantity more important than quality. If quantity forms the goals of our feedback loops, if quantity is the center of our attention and language and institutions, if we motivate ourselves,

rate ourselves, and reward ourselves on our ability to produce quantity, then quantity will be the result. [Donella Meadows, Thinking in Systems: A Primer](#)

And so we reflect this longing to have a sense or feeling of less randomness in our activities. We develop frameworks, guides, rubrics, and how-tos so we can show that the outcomes we achieved are reproducible — a kind of 'don't worry, it's science,' but it's not. OKRs (Objectives and Key Results), KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), syllabi, rubrics are all merely a symptom of this eagerness to standardize through form. They contain enough of the flavour-of-the-science-like framework. They lay out the path with authority, a sense of certainty, and confidence that we admire (perhaps even as much as we admire someone who says totally untrue statements with confidence). "Even if you have great ideas, nobody will listen to them if you sound like a wimp when you open your mouth. By contrast, even mediocre ideas seem profound when spoken with confidence" [(Geoffrey James "How to Sound Confident Even If You're Not)](#). Indeed. We grant data megaphone-volume certainty and we defer to it happily.

Nothing is neutral

We may say we aren't political, we aren't an activist and those things can all be true. What is also true is that nothing we do or say is neutral. All ideas have social locations. We are all embedded in our experiences and our context. And we are making choices, informed by some more culturally-acceptable measures like data or experience, but also soaked in bias, whim, gut, impulse and other culturally-unacceptable un-measurables.

OKRs, KPIs, rubrics, and syllabi are all created by people in a context, a "situated" space (a concept we see in basically all of [Feminist Epistemology)](#). And the outcomes, the products are the reflections of how structured or how loose the environment is where they were created. If the culture of the institution, organization, or department does not allow for experimentation or innovation, the KPIs, OKRs, and rubrics will reflect that — they will be risk-averse, tight, unambitious, unimaginative. The 'what' will reflect the 'who': the product will reflect the group of people (power structure, disparities of experience, pay, investment, biases, backgrounds, etc.). Nothing is neutral and the context always matters. This is form and function. We obsess about their relationship when it comes to interface design, even building design. But do we really grok how tightly form and function influence thought? How inclusive is the space, the culture, the environment where the ideas are created? How empowered are the people to share their ideas? Does critique happen at all and if so how is it done?

Fear of Relativism

Our fondness for a positivist, data-driven life where we make decisions based on the measures, does violence in the 'who' of this form and function relationship. We put a value on what we measure, but this raises the questions, do we measure the right things? Are we measuring in a way that makes sense? Is it possible to

be [unbiased in measuring]? Is it possible to get [pure, objective data]? And [do we measure what matters]? We measure what we value, but are we valuing the right things (retention versus love of learning for example)? Who determines the questions to ask to collect the data? How is the question articulated? We use these numbers to make decisions, so we should have really good, clear answers to all of these questions but we do not.

Instead, all we have achieved here is a troubling loop of self-reassurance: we measure the easily measured because it is measurable and we need it to be because we are making decisions based on those measures and calling them reason driven — when we know that we measure what we value (the measurable) and how we measure it is our bias (our "objective" methods).

And this troubling loop is present in every domain. I believe we do this because things that are neat and knowable make us feel as though we aren't succumbing to some of the follies of being human: being inconsistent, hypocritical, error-prone, mistaken, wrong, etc. The way we try to protect ourselves from our own follies (or from critique) is to make rules, guides, templates, rubrics, KPIs, OKRs, plans, lists — and we call it logic and agree it makes sense. Hobgoblin!

And I think what drives this is a fundamental fear of relativism. We are terrified that if we abandon the primacy of strict structures (built on wobbly assumptions, human error and biases) we will fall into a pit of relativism. How silly! This is a slippery slope argument we need not fall into. We can, and should, however, confront with fresh critique the wobbly foundations we rely on. It just requires us to do more thinking, more collaborating with people with diverse ideas, and we must abandon our very comfy sense of completeness.

> Relativism usually stems from the well-meaning principles of tolerance and diversity... The philosophical debate rolls on, but for our practical purposes relativism is a dead end. If people can wriggle out of moral judgment by claiming their actions are culturally acceptable, morality itself becomes a questionable concept. Ad absurdum, if goodness is in the eye of the beholder, slave owners get to decide whether slavery is ethical. To make any kind of moral progress we need to be able to draw a line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Fortunately, most cultures do agree on major rights and wrongs, such as murder and adultery. Forty-eight nations found enough common ground to encode basic moral principles into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. [Cennydd Bowles "Future Ethics"]

When did we decide it had to be one or the other? When did we decide that relinquishing decision-making to purely technical mechanisms was preferable? Why does including human judgment seem to invalidate the decision? Why can't we use both: the human gut *and* the algorithmic?

> A human decision will sometimes be preferable to a skewed algorithm: the more serious the implications of bias, the stronger the case for human involvement. But we shouldn't assume humans will always be more just. Like algorithms, humans are products of their cultures and environments, and can be alarmingly biased...
> To truly address implicit bias we must consider it a human problem as well as a technical one. [Cennydd Bowles "Future Ethics"]

This is not easy work. To blend algorithm and human we need some guidance, some tolerance for error, transparent action, clear intentions, diverse perspectives and more. Let's begin by agreeing that our "moral

imagination should involve emotion, not just logic" ([Cennydd Bowles "Future Ethics"](#)). And that itself will be a shocking statement for many.

The alternative, the way we do things now, is simply not tenable. We cannot unsee the harm our data-driven decisions make.

This is how we do things now:

Start with a brief that explains our vision + purpose.

Define the outcomes we hope to see.

Point to a method to apply to achieve results.

Point to a method to measure success.

— — — — — —

Then we

Restate the vision and purpose
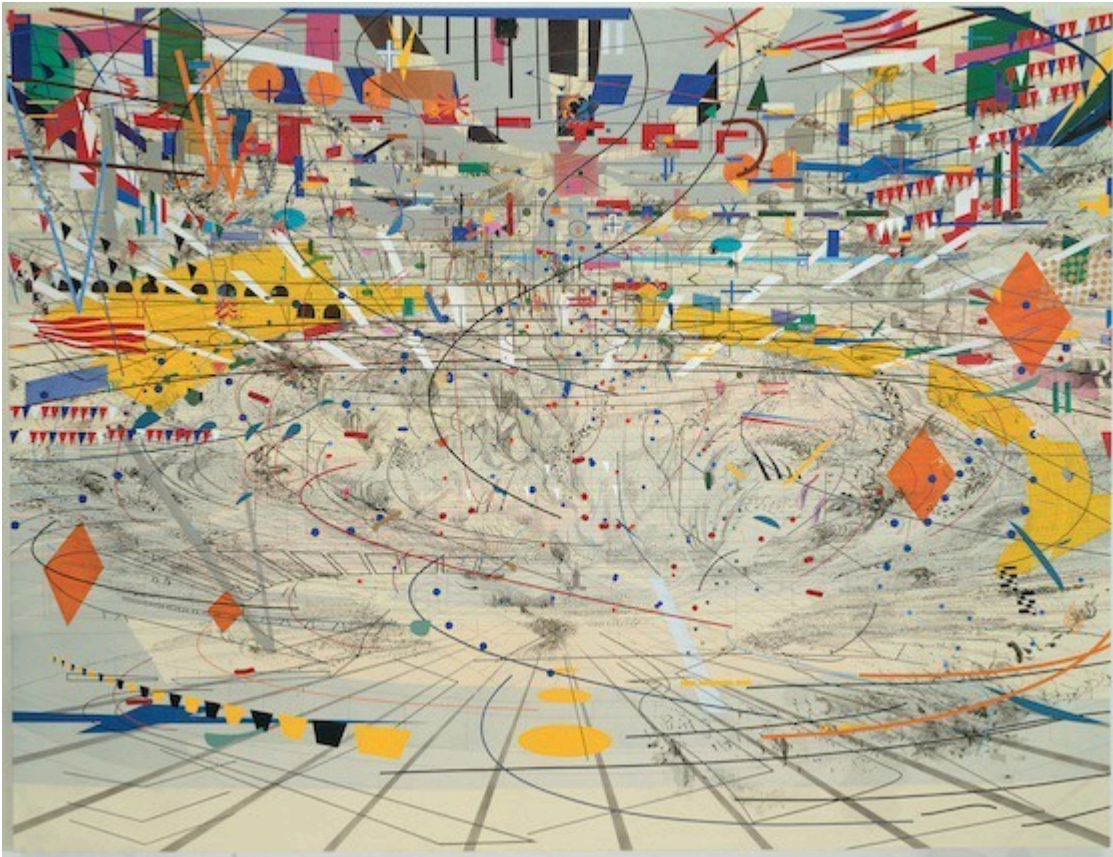
Show the outcomes have occurred

Show we've used the method

Show measures of success

And the rest is variance...

How orderly, how exact, how... transactional.

But this is the world we actually live, work, grow, and learn in. It is chaotic, dimensional, complex, intersectional, cyclical, global. It is unpredictable, dynamic, emerging, and adapting.

Julie Mehretu, *Stadia II*, 2004, ink and acrylic on canvas, 108 x 144 inches (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh) © Julie Mehretu

When we let go of our notion of clarity and completeness, we see (and think) differently.

> There's something within the human mind that is attracted to straight lines and not curves, to whole numbers and not fractions, to uniformity and not diversity, and to certainties and not mystery...We can, and some of us do, celebrate and encourage self-organization, disorder, variety, and diversity. Some of us even make a moral code of doing so, as Aldo Leopold did with his land ethic: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" ([Donella Meadows "Thinking in Systems"](#))

About the Author

[Jess Mitchell](#) is Senior Manager, Research + Design at the Inclusive Design Research Centre at OCAD University. Her work focuses on fostering innovation and inclusion within diverse communities while achieving outcomes that benefit everyone.

She applies this inclusive and broad perspective along with extensive experience managing large-scale international projects, focused organizational initiatives, and everything in between. Her work spans numerous sectors and fields, alongside decades of experience in Education.

With a background in Ethics, Jess delivers a unique perspective on messy and complex contexts that helps organizations and individuals navigate a productive way forward.

Other works:

['Open' and 'Inclusive': what the heck are they?](#)

[The Damage We Do: Assessment](#)

Attribution

32.

OPEN PRAXIS: THREE PERSPECTIVES, ONE VISION

Caroline Kuhn H., Taskeen Adam, and Judith Pete

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A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://press.rebus.community/openatthemargins/?p=287

About the Authors

Caroline Kuhn is from Venezuela where she has been concerned with the profound and increasing social inequality. This concern inspired her to pursue a career as a mathematics teacher, so she could engage with and support socially disadvantaged students in their journey into university. Her master's thesis focused on cognitive tools to improve students' mathematical knowledge. Political and ethical reasons brought her out of Venezuela and into Europe in 2011. Short research experiences at the Complutense University (Madrid) and the the Freudenthal Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (Utrecht University) led to her current PhD research at Bath Spa University. Her thesis explores how, why and to what extent undergraduates engage/don't engage with digital tools and platforms. She challenges deterministic assumptions such as young people being 'digital natives' by looking beyond the obvious to shed light on the complex and nuanced reality of students' (open/closed) digital practices. She aim at uncovering the hidden mechanisms that more often than not constrain student's agency, in particular, in their (open) educaional practices. Educational technology use must be addressed in relation with the social setting students operate in so that the interplay between students' agency and social structures can be explored, opening possibilities for social change. Currently she is a senior lecturer in education and technology at Bath Spa University leading a new award in education, technology and innovation. Website: https://carolinekuhn.net/

Other work:

Kühn H., C. (2019). Whose interest is educational technology serving? Who is included and who is excluded? RIED. Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia, 22(1), pp. 207-220. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/ried.22.1.22293

Dr. Judith Pete is a passionate and innovative professional with passion for continuous learning and professional development. She is an open education practitioner and champion, who has achieved excellent academic prowess, with the most recent being a PhD in Management, Science and Technology from the Open University in Netherlands. She also studied for an MBA in Financial management and a Bachelors of Arts in Sustainable Human Development. She is actively involved in open research, training, leadership and management, policy formulation, fund raising and humanitarian support to the marginalized groups in society. She is very passionate about Climate Change having recently enrolled for an online course on Climate Change: from Science to Lived Experiences. A part from being a reliable team leader, she has admirable public relations skills, which

has built strategic partnerships from within and outside the organizations she has interacted with. She is currently a senior lecturer and research coordinator at Tangaza University College of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Twitter: @judyphalet; Facebook: judiambu1

Taskeen Adam is a Cambridge-Africa scholar pursuing doctoral research at the University of Cambridge. Her PhD on 'Addressing injustices through MOOCs' specifically focuses on digital neo-colonialism and epistemic violence. Her journey to this topic started when she, as an engineer, founded Solar Powered Learning, with the idea that technology alone could improve education. Recognising this flawed logic led her to pursue her masters on the Sustainable Implementation of the One Laptop per Child project in Rwanda, alongside pioneering the Mobile Education for Smart Technology project in India, which both focused on the sociological rather than technical aspects of implementation. These projects highlighted that historical injustices, cultural imposition, and economic dependence continue to play a pivotal role in education.

Other works:

Between Social Justice and Decolonisation: Exploring South African MOOC Designers' Conceptualisations and Approaches to Addressing Injustices

Digital neocolonialism and massive open online courses (MOOCs): colonial pasts and neoliberal futures

Open educational practices of MOOC designers: embodiment and epistemic location

Attribution

33.

HOLDING THE LINE ON OPEN IN AN EVOLVING COURSEWARE LANDSCAPE

Nicole Allen

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Link to Slides: https://www.slideshare.net/txtbks/holding-the-line-on-open-in-an-evolving-landscape

About the Author

Nicole Allen is the Director of Open Education at SPARC. Sixteen years ago, she was an undergraduate student frustrated with the cost of textbooks. Today, she is an internationally recognized policy expert, community organizer, and speaker on open education, educational technology, and higher education affordability. Motivated by the belief that everyone, everywhere should be able to participate in shaping human knowledge, Nicole's work includes advocating for effective open policies, supporting open education programming for SPARC's North American members, and empowering emerging leaders in the open education movement.

Attribution

EXPLORING ORIGINS AS A DECOLONIZING PRACTICE

Adele Vrana and Siko Bouterse

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About the Author

Adele Vrana is Co-Director and co-founder of Whose Knowledge?. Adele has led business development and partnerships initiatives to help build a more plural and diverse communities in her native country of Brazil and globally. She is the former Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Wikimedia Foundation and a 2015 Erasmus Prize laureate on behalf of her work to expand access to Wikipedia in the Global South. Adele holds a BA in International Relations and a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Sao Paulo. When not re-imagining what the internet of the future would look like and advocating for that online, Adele spends most of her time raising two feminist boys, reading black feminists from the Global South, and spending time with her friends from close and afar.

Siko Bouterse is Co-Director and co-founder of Whose Knowledge?. She's organized, localized and imagined a more plural and truly global web for over 10 years. She is former Director of Community Resources at the Wikimedia Foundation. Siko has an MA in Middle East History from the American University in Cairo, where her award-winning thesis focused on social history not captured in traditional historical sources. She also holds a BA in Anthropology from UC Berkeley where she worked at the Phoebe Hearst Museum. When not rabble-rousing online, Siko is paddleboarding in the ocean, cooking and reading about delicious feasts, making bad mixed-media art, and raising a feminist daughter.

Attribution

35.

OPENNESS IN WHOSE INTEREST?

Maha Bali

Originally published on October 29, 2019

I had the pleasure of participating in #OERizona, a hybrid free event (very well organized, very engaging for me as a virtual participant) ahead of OpenEd19. Thanks to all who worked on it – I know Pressbooks and Hypothesis co-organized with others. Here is just a lightbulb moment I had and others in Zoom chat said blew their minds… so I wanna articulate it better. It is now 20 mins past midnight, so hopefully I am coherent, but if not, you know why!

So I have always felt uncomfortable with frontloading permissions when we talk about Open Education. And I said that when Steel Wagstaff was talking about open as in free vs open as permissions.

So something occurred to me. I don't like talk of permissions as what open is. I do, as a parent, want to raise a daughter who understands, respects, and seeks permission in her interactions with others. And this was my lightbulb moment. Permissions are paternalistic. To focus on openness as permissions is paternalistic.

[Hanni responded about marginalized communities and importance of permissions, and her comment made my lightbulb moment a *firework* moment]

Next point, building on this, though…

Discourse is so *contextual*. The same thing can be said by a white person and sound colonizing but it is completely different when an indigenous or postcolonial or person or POC says it. It is so contextual.

And so… I also thought of a couple of things.

First, permissions are sort of a response to copyright. In many ways, copyright is an unjust law that restricts and gatekeeps knowledge to less privileged people (and most money goes to publishers, not just authors). And I am uncomfortable with defining openness in terms of permissions with respect to copyright, we define open over it not being copyright…

And that is such a technical way to describe openness which for many of us is a worldview, a value, not a technical, instrumental thing.

My thoughts are… white colonizers came into other lands, violated them, and *without permission* basically looted resourced, destroyed people's psyche, and, you know, basically colonized. To then, now, turn it around,

and, after years of controlling knowledge and who had access to it, to NOW decide to be **generous** and give permission? This reminds me of how World Bank and USAID offer funding **generously** to help developing countries **emerge** when much of their economic struggles are caused from those same sources.

It feels… neoliberal and neocolonial. Or at least as something trying to be the opposite of them, while defining itself by them, thus recentering the Western/colonial hegemony. First it was about how this knowledge was protected, and now it's about how it is shared. But it reproduces both the Western knowledge itself, and its place as the worldview that dominates how knowledge works in the world.

This is only the case when it is dominant cultures being open. Because, in the end, in whose interest is there act of being open? it ends up reproducing Western hegemony over knowledge again. Not because it silences other knowledges intentionally, but because it assumes Western knowledge is useful to others, and it ignores the privilege behind being open that makes it not feasible for less privileged voices to join in THAT openness that is based on permissions. There are other openness-es that are more values based and not permissions based. And they're less financially tied and more accessible to more diverse people.

And here is the thing:

1. I don't mean individuals who give openly or give permissions are bad people or colonial. I am saying that framing the open movement in terms of permissions is a technical emphasis that makes it seem more aligned with neoliberalism than more social justice oriented ways of thinking.
2. Context matters. Taking permission is *important,* as is *giving* permission. The people who invented copyright built their knowledge and wealth on colonized people's knowledge and wealth. To now turn it into generosity of permission is problematic. On the flip side, people who have been marginalized had knowledge and more extracted from them, often violently, and their permission is so important! Because sometimes their openness is in the interests of the dominant groups and not their own. TK licenses are beautiful in their nuance. Same thing with women for example. Essential to ask permission e.g. to touch a woman's body, even I would say to suggest anything non-platonic, you need permission.
3. In my British school, we were not allowed to speak Arabic. It's not that we could speak our native language with permission. We were not allowed at all except in the Arabic and religion classes. If someone then came and gave us permission to speak Arabic, should we praise them, when they never had the right to prevent us from speaking it? In a similar vein, if Muslims says a person does not have permission to touch the Quran unless they are clean (same as it is for Muslims, because it is a holy/sacred book), this permission should be respected. Does that make sense? Do you see the difference?

And this is why, for me, the violation of copyright in Egypt is transgressive. People won't be able to learn medicine (because the dominant knowledge of medicine is in English by Western textbooks and scientists, in expensive imported textbooks) so they copy illegally. It's against the law. But it's an unjust law.

Then someone gives permission. But the entire discipline and industry have been gatekeeping and withholding for so long. They choose what to share and what to keep. They still control the permission.

It seems paternalistic and neocolonial in this sense. Because again it reproduces a cycle of MORE Western knowledge offered to the world (how generous) and in comparison less minority knowledge, because also, minorities have less funding and resources to be open, less time to be open, more to lose and less to gain by being open.

If we want to tackle openness from a social justice perspective, we need to always ask whose interests are served by what we do and say.

Open Educational Practices as a human endeavor is so much more than a technical permission. And I wish we would push this aspect of it to the background of details and instead foreground the other aspects relating to social justice, connection, and co-construction of knowledge in potentially equitable ways, for the interests of diverse people, and on their terms.

And so you do not start understanding openness by comparing it to copyright. That is not why someone like me would be in it, nor will it ever be.

About the Author

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36.

LOGIC AND RHETORIC: THE PROBLEM WITH DIGITAL LITERACY

Naomi Barnes

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The computer is a rhetorical device, not just a logical one — [Richard Lanham](#)

There is a lot of rhetoric hidden by logic in education circles about the Internet and the responsibility teachers have to educate students about what and how to compose online. We as a society are increasingly realising the computer, which appears to be quite a mathematical object, is in actual fact as political as the people who use them. Aristotle presented three approaches to rhetoric . They were:

- *epideictic* where praise and blame were formalised,
- *deliberative* where right and wrong were determined,
- *forensic* where just and unjust were considered.

In Ancient Greece these were performed in formal settings, but over the centuries have been blended , dissected and stretched, morphing into multiple ways of communicating in order to initiate an action. This is mostly due to formal communication becoming (and continuing to become) more informal. Aristotle formalising emotive communication is probably one of the first occasions that logic was used to mask rhetoric.

The Education system is very good at formalising rhetorical communication. A system which is steeped in ideas and knowledge cannot help having a political agenda, and a system which is increasingly complex, cannot help but sort out what is good and bad about those ideas and knowledge. There is simply too much information to teach it all. Discussions about what goes into a curriculum/pedagogy and what gets left out is intensely rhetorical.

However, education has a penchant for models and guides which determine the best approach to making those decisions. These models, guides and standards, are also rhetorical because they make decisions about what goes in and what gets left out, working to perform a neat and polished view of knowledge. It appears logical but is, in fact, rhetorical.

Digital literacy pedagogy has been struggling with this paradox for decades. As technology becomes more complex, it is more difficult to hide the rhetoric in the logic. Too many people have experiences outside of the boundaries presented by the logic facade. This is quite apparent in comment sections of education research public dissemination (like The Conversation) where the wider population can dispute the research based on personal experience, cracking open the logical facade of research and walking it out onto a soapbox.

So how do teachers teach children to communicate in a world which is so liquefied and flattened by mass public commentary? Below are 5 approaches to digital literacy that language researchers in digital rhetoric have identified.

The error model

The error model of pedagogy is a constant bubbling undercurrent in all approaches to teaching, and also deeply ingrained in cultural politics. In digital literacy, this involves correcting mistakes as they occur or, the inverse, showing a model with errors and asking students to correct them. Most teachers would be familiar with this approach to teaching. It seems logical, there are rules in place about grammar and design which guide composition. We can see this approach in the actions of Big Tech companies who walk close to the line of error as a business model. The problem with the logic of this system, is that the rules it privileges erases those who do not follow them or have differing cultural experiences to the culture who invented the rules.

There are multiple literacies in our world. Students need to be encouraged to think specifically of their audience when composing a text and be able to manipulate that text dependent on who is listening. In digital realms, this becomes even more complex as algorithms (rhetorical texts in themselves) are actors in exchanging texts between audiences. In digital literacy "know your reader" is no longer a logic in composition.

The apprenticeship model

The apprenticeship model closely resembles a trendy school based pedagogy known as gradual release of responsibility. This is where the explicit instruction of how to compose digital texts becomes the focus. For example, an expert, who knows how to compose an email will model email writing, then together the class will work on an email, and finally the students will compose their own emails. This scaffolded approach works very well until the complexity of email writing becomes unwieldy. When should an email be formal, when should it be one line? Can I sign off with flourish? Should I use "Dr" in the salutation? Quickly, the logic of using expert guidance in a continuously changing space reveals that the notion of "expert" is deeply rhetorical. Critics of the apprenticeship model suggest that such composition practices need to be practiced in conversation.

The dialogic model

The dialogic model considers the conversational nature of digital texts where students respond in time to their audience. Students experiment with approaches, respond to issues and discuss solving problems. The dialogic model reveals another logical trap that assumes that all people participating in the dialogue know the rules and follow them. This approach needs expert facilitation and a knowledge of the members of the community. This approach is attractive because it generalises out to the wider community that dialogue is the preferable approach and, in a democratic culture, seems logical. Dialogic approaches rarely consider the real world situatedness of digital communication and suffers from the same scaffolded reductive rhetoric of the previous two approaches.

Situated learning model

The criticisms of reductive approaches often logically lead to situated learning. Students need experience of the "real world" in order to learn how to effectively communicate online. This approach has been leapt upon by industry for its pragmatism. But as with all pragmatic approaches, there is a rhetoric that simulated or real world experiences are safe provided there is adult guidance. While you may scoff at the ridiculous nature of this idea because you have just been scrolling though the disaster artist that is Twitter, there is a further underlying rhetoric that is often ignored by proponents of situated learning. The key rhetoric I alluded to earlier: the algorithms.

The algorithms are rhetorical on many levels:

1. They have the illusion of logic because they are mathematical;
2. They orchestrate the exchanges between users, muddying the nature of the audience;
3. They are developed by industries that have a very particular political ideology that aligns heavily with individualism and economic rationalism; and
4. They work to both hide and elevate what individual users are seeing meaning notions of safety can only truly be determined by the individual users.

While the digital world is infested with overt corporate and ideological rhetorics, these algorithmic rhetorics are not greatly considered in school based digital literacy and situated practices would have to creatively timetable discussions which need intensive intellectual time and have very little immediate effect size. Thus the logic of working in the real world hides possibly the greatest rhetorical masking in the digitally mediated world.

The gift economy model

The final pedagogical model in this discussion meshes the dialogic and situated learning models to consider the gift economy which has developed as the world becomes more highly mediated. This model celebrates community but considers the ability of people to learn the rituals of the online world by observing and participating only to the extent they are comfortable. This model is highly anthropological — it privileges the novice and relies on the generosity of the wider digital community to initiate new users into the culture of the site. While there is a definite need for orchestration of safe spaces, this approach considers that each digital tool has its own amorphous genre and that one size does not fit all. This approach does not hide the rhetoric behind the logic — it embraces the rhetoric, and requires students to understand the ancient communicative art. However, the logic of embracing rhetoric in the gift economy masks wider industrial implications associated with the ever increasing gig economy and payment in prestige.

No matter how we try to account and plan for the politicisation of education through purportedly logical

models, there is always an outlier. So what do we do? My thoughts are closer consideration of social justice models which are designed to consider the outliers, but they also have their problematic rhetorics.

What do you think? Which model would you choose to teach digital literacy? Have you used an alternative?

If you are interested in reading further, I read Elizabeth Losh's chapter in her book Virtualpolitik, *Hacking Aristotle. You can also visit her [blogspot](#).*

About the Author

Naomi's research is in digital rhetoric. She focuses on qualitative critical network analysis and how multiple modes of communication are at play in online human networking. She is interested in the relationships humans have with each other on online, particularly in social media, and the socio-cultural theories and philosophical traditions which help us better understand how technology has changed the way we communicate.

Other works:

Barnes, Naomi (2017) Blogging as a method of inquiry. Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology, 8(1), pp. 17-26. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7577/rerm.2236

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EDUCATIONAL CONTENT, OPENNESS AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE DIGITAL ECOLOGY

Tel Amiel

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"I remember, remembering without images"
Five Rings – Orla Barry

Almost everything we do today is mediated by some type of device. It is difficult to perform any task without having data created by us, or data resulting from our actions, circulating through third party computers. Permeated as we are by 'free' services, offered in the form of spaces for collaboration, production and sharing of content – it is worth asking: why are these services being offered at 'no cost' to educational institutions and used by administrators, teachers and students?

The world only recently learned of Edward Snowden's revelations about the amount of information and methods used to collect data from individuals and organizations by the United States *National Security Agency* (NSA)[1]. What was once a niche discussion by researchers and 'technophobic alarmists' has become a scandal that has opened a Pandora's box leading to public discussion on privacy and surveillance. There are now regular accounts about the indiscriminate collection of data and personal information by corporations through devices, apps and services, as well as a general lack of zeal by companies and governments with data that citizens considered protected, confidential or private.

Still, for the vast majority of the population, the alarm did not bring about substantial change in behavior. Even the revelation that companies like Microsoft and Google were cooperating with the United States government through NSA's PRISM program sounded perhaps too remote to elicit any concrete reaction from most users of these platforms.

The alarm rang once again with the revelation of of data collected through Facebook for political purposes by British company Cambridge Analytica[2]. The use of profiling and its use on social networks to influence voters through content, in several countries, made the privacy alarm ring very loudly for the billions of users of the largest social network on the planet. Many (including celebrities!) declared that they would leave the

network. Ultimately, the impact on the number of Facebook accounts and profit was negligible, nothing but a jab.

In the context of Brazil, the jab became a hard cross with the presidential election of 2018, and the climate of mistrust created by the circulation of fake news[3]. The impact of the indiscriminate collection and use of data by surveillance platforms created an open wound in family discussion groups (which, off course, happen in these same platforms), the fear of open dialogue in work environments, and the marked polarization of daily living. The belief about the neutrality of technology and the *certainty* that social networks were bringing us closer together was upended in mainstream media and in bar conversations, overturning the principle (as Zuckerberg promised[4]) that social network services like Facebook are naturally forces for good and promote the integration of humankind. The consequence of this awareness, for a large part of the population, was not a radical change in behavior. Still, we have evidence that there is at least an interest in better understanding the meaning of this uncharted territory[5].

In our interactions with various content and media platforms, we contribute content *explicitly* (images, videos, texts and the like), in which case we can establish some measure of protection by abiding to rules or following an ethic of sharing (photos of projects and student productions, yes; photos of students' faces in class, no). But we also share data in *implicit* ways, as when data about our patterns of behavior, interactions, our pauses and breaths are collected; everything is content and, for this market, it is what generates value. It is opaque, distant data. It is not visible, tangible, and memorable like videos and photos in a timeline. Having access to and understanding the scale and scope of the information we share in this manner is not a simple task.

The electoral scandals and fake news blew up the neutrality argument of content platforms, which are regulated by people in corporations, but mainly by opaque algorithms. Even when dealing with the data in the aggregate, searching for patterns, the algorithms select and promote content, indicate videos, photos, news and contacts. Algorithms can strengthen world views, radicalism and prejudices[6].

The scandals and problems mentioned above have at least one point in common: large businesses that are 'intermediaries' of our experiences. The consolidation of the market means that most of the platforms we use to produce, store and share content, articulate our research, and communicate with our colleagues take place through these channels, whether we know it or not. These companies are some of the same platforms involved in some of the leaks and scandals mentioned above.

The sharing of videos posted on YouTube; documents, data and sensitive information sent via Gmail or Drive (Google); the creation of student and teacher groups on Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook (all from Facebook), are just some examples of common practices in research institutions, and in basic and higher education. The use of a non-institutional email as an 'official' point of communication by educational institutions and other actors in the public sphere is very common.

If in the social sphere the concern has stimulated discussion and debate, in the field of education the consternation is still incipient. We have been holding the user responsible for making 'conscious use' of the networks, and we ignore the power and role of governments, institutions and large companies in building and defining this digital ecosystem. The biggest and most important problems regarding the relationship

between educational institutions and corporations associated with surveillance capitalism is just beginning to be illuminated[7].

Public universities and educational networks around the world (including Brazil) have established partnerships with companies such as Microsoft and Google, outsourcing services previously considered essential, such as email management and data storage. Personal data, private information in scanned documents, search strings, and a multitude of private data circulate opaquely through these connections, weaving a cozy relationship between institutions and businesses. In addition, the adoption of these services by institutions, teachers and administrators turns them into *de facto* communication and information structures within institutions, replacing the institutional apparatus.

When school administrators define that the space for notification and information exchange will be, for example, a Facebook group, what choice (besides using Facebook) does a parent or guardian have, if she/he wants to be kept abreast of what happens in school? If a teacher defines that students should join a WhatsApp group to articulate classroom activities, what real choice does a student have to deny her or his participation?

In these and other cases, recurrent in our institutions in Brazil (and I believe, many other, particularly poorer countries), several dilemmas remain unexplored. First, there is no awareness or clarity of the meaning of 'gratuity' and the forms of control and surveillance that *are in fact* the business model behind these services. Second, there is a clear asymmetry of power between the providers and the users, which is rarely questioned and becomes, in certain cases, a form of coercion. Third, the opportunity to counteract inertia and educate on how allegiance to these platforms has created qualitatively different, and often harmful formats and spaces of communication, is lost. Finally, the opportunity to explore alternatives to surveillance services is not explored.

We need to have deeper discussions in our schools and universities in regards to how we should exercise control over our work, communication and sharing tools, particularly when we promote open education. We have learned through scandals that these choices matter and, and that these platforms have a direct impact on the structure of our society. Fortunately, we already have several alternatives in the form of services, systems and models (which do exist, both paid and free/libre) that allow us to glimpse other futures for our technological development. The task is urgent.

Notes

[1]The Guardian, "The NSA Files", 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/the-nsa-files.

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Poisoning Brazilian Politics. WhatsApp Can Stop It.", *The New York Times,* October 17, 2018, Opinion section, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/opinion/brazil-election-fake-news-whatsapp.html.

[4]Agência Brasil, "Mark Zuckerberg publica manifesto e defende 'comunidade global'", 17 de Fevereiro, 2017, http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/internacional/noticia/2017-02/mark-zuckerberg-publica-manifesto-e-defende-comunidade-global.

[5]Pew Research Center, "The State of Privacy in America", *Pew Research Center* (blog), 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/21/the-state-of-privacy-in-america/.

[6]Max Fisher e Amanda Taub, "How YouTube Radicalized Brazil", *The New York Times*, 11 de Agosto, 2019, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/11/world/americas/youtube-brazil.html; Zeynep Tufekci, "Algorithmic Harms beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent Challenges of Computational Agency", *Colo. Tech. LJ* 13 (2015): 203.

[7]See our Education Under Surveillance Project at https://educacaovigiada.org.br. Also: Henrique Parra et al., "Infraestruturas, Economia e Política Informacional: O Caso Do Google Suite for Education", *Mediações* 23, no. 1 (2018): 63–99, https://doi.org/10.5433/2176-6665.2018v23n1p63; Ribeiro da Cruz, Filipe Saraiva, e Tel Amiel, "Coletando Dados Sobre o Capitalismo de Vigilância Nas Instituições Públicas Do Ensino Superior Do Brasil.", in *VI Simpósio Internacional LAVITS* (LAVITS, Salvador, 2019), http://lavits.org/eventos/simposio-lavits-2019/

About the Author

Tel Amiel completed his PhD in Instructional Technology at the University of Georgia. He is currently professor at the School of Education at the University of Brasília where he coordinates the UNESCO Chair in Distance Education. He was previously coordinator of the UNESCO Chair in Open Education (Unicamp), and a visiting fellow at the University of Wollongong and Stanford University, and a visiting professor at Utah State University. He co-leads the Open Education Initiative, a grassroot collective dedicated to promoting open education policy and practice.

Other works:

Amiel, T., ter Haar, E., Vieira, M. S., & Soares, T. C. (2020). Who Benefits from the Public Good? How OER Is Contributing to the Private Appropriation of the Educational Commons. In D. Burgos

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38.

A REFLECTION ON OPEN: AN OPEN REFLECTION

Tutaleni Asino

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My entrance to open was not about textbooks. It was and remains about equity and representation. For most of my life, I have been finding myself in a world that regularly implies and sometimes explicitly states that I do not belong. This has motivated me in multiple ways. It is the reason I wanted to study film because the representation I saw of me as an Afrikan village boy in movies, I could not recognise. It is the reason I pursued media studies and political science as a university student, because I was regularly seeing images of kids that look like me on television while living in New York City, that could be fed for only one dollar a day. It is this same pursuit that drives me when it comes to intellectual endeavour; a fight to not beg for legitimisation from those who do not recognise my being, but a form of elbowing my way into the room and at the table of humanity where I know I belong. In all of these experiences, I have had to sit across people who reviled my presence, some of whom were mentally spitting in my face and could only breath when I've left the room.

So, when at the OpenEd19 conference, where I was on the planning committee, a panel with commercial publishers was proposed, I supported the idea. I saw it as a chance to sit across those who I cannot entirely agree with; but perhaps I did not fully grasp the opposition to the panel from the community, because for me again the entry into OpenEd was never about textbooks. Textbooks are an important cause, but they were not my primary issue. This is because I have seen open textbooks that are only open in terms of access but closed in terms of representation and diversity of thought. Some of the same people that were writing expensive textbook are still the same writing free open textbooks. The same persons who were saying Afrika has no culture, no history of innovation in for-profit textbooks, could now say it in an open textbook. The same people who omitted certain persons in their citations when they wrote for profit textbooks are excluding them in the open textbooks.

I saw the open education movement of which OER is a part as a response to one of my favourite Afrikan proverb…"until lions have their own historians, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." My attraction to the open movement, in summary, 1) was driven by a belief that it will give lions and lionesses the

chance to tell their own stories, and have them heard; 2) it was based on the idea that no one person, no one culture has superior knowledge and 3) that human knowledge cannot be complete if it does not include all humans or if some are dehumanised at the expense of some extolling their knowledge structures. I often saw my way of knowing on the margins, and I saw Open as a way to stop the marginalisation.

My experiences with the OpenEd19 conference as a planner made me realise that the gate through which I entered was different from many of the people who I was conversing with. The idea of talking with for-profit publishers for some tantamounted to a betrayal. I respect that perspective. Unfortunately, a lot of the conversation was wrought with too much dehumanisation and personal attacks that it made me question how open some of the people in the open movement are.

I think disagreements can be good. They can afford an opportunity for advancing a field or a conversation. I think we still have many conversations that we need to have. In addition to open textbooks, the other topics that are of interest to me as they relate to open include the following:

- Indigenous knowledge and open – I spent the last seven years as chair of the Indigenous Knowledge and the Academy SIG in the Comparative International Education Society. One of the many benefits of open relates to publication and making knowledge available to the masses, but it also has me thinking about what that means to indigenous knowledge. There are a lot of questions in this space, especially as it pertains to ownership, commodification and appropriation that need exploring.
- The Open Paradigm – I believe open is still anchored around or in a western paradigm. My friend Dr. Phil Tietjen put this best in a recent conversation that the Creative Commons itself is rooted in a Western legal framework, and so are the licensing. So, for someone who decentralisation of knowledge or decolonisation is a focus, this paradigm could be problematic or at least, worth problematising.
- Nature of knowledge – We haven't really discussed much about the nature of knowledge in the open education space. We focus on the nature of ownership, but not much on the nature of knowledge or whose knowledge is being owned. As Maha Bali has said in the past, *whose knowledge is being opened?*
- The Kraaling Dilemma – when you put a framework on something you control who enters, and have a say on who who stays in. As we continue to present frameworks related to open, we also have to examine and problematise the very frameworks we are creating and the exclusions they (re)introduce.

There are many gates through which people enter the open house. It is okay for those many different gates to exist. After all, as the great Nigerian scholar, Chinua Achebe eloquently puts it, "No man should enter his house through another man's gate" [No person should enter their house through another person's gate]. The challenge for those of us in Open is to recognise and respect the variance of those many gates, especially when they can bring in people who have been relegated to the margin for far too long.

About the Author

Tutaleni I. Asino, is an Associate Professor of Educational Technology and Director of the Emerging Technology and Creativity Research Lab at Oklahoma State University's College of Education and Human Sciences. His research agenda includes Comparative and International Education, mobile learning, diffusion of innovations, Open Education and how culture, agency and representation manifest themselves and interplay in learning settings. He is an active member of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology where he served as president of the Culture, Learning and Technology Division and the Comparative International Education Society where he served as Chair of the Indigenous Knowledge Special Interest Group.

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ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Although this volume is a collection of works that have (almost) all been previously published, seven key areas related to accessibility were assessed during the importing and editing process. The checklist below has been drawn from the [Rebus Guide to Publishing Open Textbooks (So Far)](#), which was itself adapted from the [BCcampus Open Education Accessibility Toolkit](#). While a checklist such as this is just one part of a holistic approach to accessibility, it is one way to begin work on embedded good accessibility practices.

Accessibility Checklist

Checklist for Accessibility in Webbook

Area of Focus	Requirements	Pass?
Font Size	Font size is 12 point or higher for body text	Yes
Font Size	Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes	Yes
Font Size	Font size can be zoomed to 200%	Yes
Formulas	Formulas have been created using MathML	Not applicable
Formulas	Formulas are images with alternative text descriptions, if MathML is not an option	Not applicable
Organizing Content	Content is organized under headings and subheadings	Yes
Organizing Content	Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g. Heading 1. Heading 2, etc.) as well as logically (if the title if Heading 1 then there should be no other Heading 1 styles as the title is the uppermost level)	Yes
Images	Images that convey information include Alternative Text (alt-text) descriptions of the image's content or function	Yes
Images	Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image	Yes
Images	Images do not rely on colour to convey information	Yes, with the following exceptions: • Image 1 of 1 in Chapter 13 • Slide 17 of 41 in Chapter 15
Images	Images that are purely decorative contain empty alternative text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information)	Yes
Tables	Tables include row and column headers	Yes
Tables	Tables include a title or caption	Yes
Tables	Tables do not have merged or split cells	Yes
Tables	Tables have adequate cell padding	Yes
Weblinks	The weblink is meaningful in context, and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more"	Yes

Weblinks	Weblinks do not open new windows or tabs	Yes
Weblinks	If weblinks must open in a new window, a textual reference is included in the link information	Not applicable
Embedded Multimedia	A transcript has been made available for a multimedia resource that includes audio narration or instruction*	Not applicable
Embedded Multimedia	Captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content are included in the multimedia resource that includes audio synchronized with a video presentation	Yes, with the following exceptions: • Chapter 9: Nina Simone: Don't let me be misunderstood does not have captions • Chapter 9: Open pedagogy open discussion #YearofOpen includes machine-generated captions • Chapter 15: Digital pedagogy lab Vancouver livestream does not have captions but includes a transcript • Chapter 18: OpenCon 2017 live day 2 does not include captions but includes a transcript • Chapter 20: Sherri Spelic: Provocation for #TowardsOpenness at #OEB17 includes machine-generated captions • Chapter 28: Video by Ewan McAndrew, Wikimedian in Residence, University of Edinburgh does not include captions • Chapter 32: #OER19 – Keynote Panel: Taskeen Adam, Caroline Kuhn and Judith Pete includes machine-generated captions • Chapter 33: #OER19: Holding the Line on Open in an Evolving Courseware Landscape [O-149] includes machine-generated captions • Chapter 34: Adele Vrana and Siko Bouterse, "Whose Knowledge?" includes machine-generated captions
Embedded Multimedia	Audio descriptions of contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are included in the multimedia resource	Not yet evaluated