
BOOK AND EBOOK REVIEW

Book Review – 2020

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The following publication contains book reviews of these titles:

- Herodotou, C., Sharples, M. and Scanlon, E. (eds) (2018) *Citizen Inquiry: Synthesising Science and Enquiry Learning*. London: Routledge, 237 pages ISBN 9781138208698
 - Baxter, J., Callaghan, G., and McAvoy, J. (eds) (2018) *Creativity and Critique in Online Learning: Exploring and Examining Innovations in Online Pedagogy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 287 pages ISBN 978-3-030-08668-8
 - Krause, S.D. (2019) *More than a Moment, Contextualizing the past, present, and future of MOOCs*, Utah: Utah State University Press. 168 pages. ISBN: 9781607327868 (paperback) 9781607327875 (ebook)
 - Rowell, C. (ed) (2019) *Social Media in Higher Education: Case Studies, Reflections and Analysis*, Cambridge, UK: OpenBook Publishers 304 pages ISBN 9781783746682. Available as an open access book at: <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0162>
 - Morris, S. M. & Stommel, J. (2019), *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy*. Hybrid Pedagogy, Open Access: <https://criticaldigitalpedagogy.pressbooks.com/> ISBN 9780692152690.
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Publisher’s note: Review 4 originally contained the incorrect initials for two of the authors for a chapter being reviewed. The original references to N. Horton and H. Withnell have been corrected to A. Horton and N. Withnell - 28/8/2020

Review 1: *Citizen Inquiry: Synthesising Science and Enquiry Learning* (Christothea Herodotou, Mike Sharples, Eileen Scanlon (eds))

Review authored by: Chris Douce, The Open University, UK

Review of: Herodotou, C., Sharples, M. and Scanlon, E. (eds) (2018) *Citizen Inquiry: Synthesising Science and Enquiry Learning*. London: Routledge, 237 pages ISBN 9781138208698

One of the great things that information technology and the communications revolution gives us is the ability to communicate and work with a wide range of collaborators from different locations in new ways. We can communicate and collaborate with others with the aim of solving scientific problems, or we might communicate and collaborate with others with a view to learning new

skills or knowledge. In some respects, the idea of citizen inquiry brings those ideas together.

Citizen Inquiry: Synthesising science and enquiry learning presents citizen inquiry as a term that combines “the concepts of citizen science and inquiry-based learning to illustrate the pedagogical advantages of this approach”. There is another key point that the book is keen to convey, namely, that citizen inquiry “shifts the emphasis of scientific investigations from scientists to the general public”.

The book is described as “essential reading for academic researchers and professional educators interested in the potential of online technology in all levels of education, from primary and secondary level through to further education and lifelong learning”. It also describes itself as being useful for undergraduate and postgraduate courses that present or are involved with “research methods in education as well as developments in science education and educational software”.

The relative broadness of its aims are also reflected in the broadness of the papers that the editors have curated. Following an introduction, the first main paper, by V. Curtis, R. Holliman, A. Jones and E. Scanlon, primarily explores motivation for participation in online citizen science. The papers describe research that relates to two projects: Foldit and Planet Hunters. Motivation is a theme that is also explored in a chapter by K. Peterman, R. Becker-Klein, C. Styliniski and A. Grack Nelson that considers the connections between assessment and citizen science in secondary schools. Motivation is further explored in another paper that considers the influence of educational

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background, and is a significant theme in the chapter about Geocaching by *G. Clough*.

Interestingly, the book presented two chapters that went beyond its subtitle that emphasised science. One chapter by *S. Dunn and M. Hedges* presented research into the arena of 'citizen humanities' and another by *K. Charitonos* touched on the subject of culture and language learning. I found the chapter about citizen humanities very difficult to read, but I found that the chapter that was concerned with 'cultural citizen inquiry' presented an interesting contrast to some of the other chapters that had a more scientific focus.

There were two chapters in this book that I enjoyed. The first had the title that began "community engagement around poor air quality in London". This chapter by *L. Kloetzer, C. Jennett, L. Francis and M. Haklay* presented a project where air quality was monitored at different points in the city by volunteers. I liked the fact that the chapter presented why air quality was an important subject to research and also connected the study that was described to other projects. I was also surprised (and intrigued) to discover that some of the air quality monitoring has been carried out within a two minute walk from my home.

The second paper was entitled "exploring citizen science and inquiry learning through *ispotnature.org*" by *J. Ansine, M. Dodd, D. Robinson and P. McAndrew*. One of reasons why I liked this paper reflected a reason why I liked the air quality monitoring paper: a personal interest and curiosity. My curiosity relates to a question that I had about why some plants in my garden were being attacked by some unknown insects, and an awareness that I have done little study into the science of ecosystems. The chapter introduced readers to the concepts of informal and formal learning, and explored how citizen science has the potential to facilitate transition from one to the other.

My main criticism of this text relates to the aims of the text: in trying to support a very broad range of educators, researchers and academics, I fear that it does not support any of these very directly. When I read the title, I was expecting to read case studies and to gain an insight into pedagogic design and practice. Whilst there are papers that do share and present those insights, I did want to read more than was offered. I wanted to read more about practical issues and challenges, but this is more of a reflection about my own expectations rather than any issue about the collection of papers that Herodotou, Sharples and Scanlon have presented. This said, the final chapter does offer some useful suggestions about technology, community and inquiry design.

To conclude, citizen inquiry is a subject that is clearly worthy of study; student collaboration and exploration has the potential to facilitate engagement and opportunity. I have little doubt that this small volume makes a contribution in terms of exposing some of the themes, issues and debates that are important in this area. In some respects, its breadth could also be viewed a strength: every paper is thoroughly referenced, and these references can, of course, be used to inform anyone who is looking to carry out research in this area.

Review 2: *Creativity and Critique in Online Learning: Exploring and Examining Innovations in Online Pedagogy* (Jacqueline Baxter, George Callaghan and Jean McAvoy (eds))

Review authored by: Natascha Chtena, College of the Sequoias, Visalia, California, US

Review of: Baxter, J., Callaghan, G., and McAvoy, J. (eds) (2018) *Creativity and Critique in Online Learning: Exploring and Examining Innovations in Online Pedagogy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 287 pages ISBN 978-3-030-08668-8

Much of the professional literature on online pedagogy tends to focus on effectiveness structures, "best practices" and other types of generalized advice that fail to account for the social construction of learning and the mediating effects of technological context. *Creativity and Critique in Online Learning* seeks to offer an alternative perspective by focusing on the working practices, experiences and unique pedagogical methods of educators working across a range of disciplines at a large distance learning university. It is centred on the very particular case of the Open University (OU) in the UK and explores how case studies from this institution may be helpful to individuals working in similar institutional contexts, as well as colleagues across the higher education field more broadly, who are designing or looking to design online programs and degrees. The volume, which examines practical teaching methods and discusses relevant pedagogical theory, highlights the importance of developing clear and intentional teaching strategies at the outset, the need and opportunities for creative teaching and assessment, and, crucially, the need for management to devote substantial resources to develop digital learning.

The volume consists of thirteen chapters, nine of which focus on case studies. Following a brief introduction, Chapter 2 ("The Context of Online Teaching and Learning: Neoliberalism, Marketization and Online Teaching," authored by the book's editors) outlines the theoretical backbone of the volume, which draws on social theories of learning and teaching and places online education in a broader context. The chapter begins with a critical look at the marketization of higher education and how capitalist forces affect the experiences of those who teach and those who are taught. It goes on to critique the mainstream discourse around technology enhanced learning, which largely assumes a linear relationship of cause and effect between technology and educational change. The authors argue that in order to design effective online educational systems and experiences, and improve existing ones, we must stop favouring the technical over the social. The authors' proposition is simple: we should approach online teaching and learning as *human practices with social meaning*. The ensuing chapters use a series of case studies to engage with these issues and ideas.

Chapter 3 by R. Manning and D. Smith focuses on the OU's longstanding use of forums for teaching and learning. The authors present a series of forum structures commonly employed by the OU, distinguish between

different core elements of online forums which are useful to consider in their design, and analyse the contribution of forums to student learning. The discussion and analysis here is based on tutoring and management of a broad range of modules from the social sciences within the OU. Rather than focus on interaction facilitation in this type of learning space, the authors highlight the 'structural' (i.e., issues relating to the more mechanical aspects of forums) and 'functional' (referring to purpose and learning strategy) concerns that are related to the use of forums in online and blended environments. That is, they examine forums in their broader social, cultural and institutional context, and discuss how contextual issues inform potential approaches to their use.

Chapter 4 focuses on student experiences of online collaboration and teamwork. H. Kaye and J. Barrett examine some of the benefits and challenges of students working together in an asynchronous online environment, and discuss the role of tutors in facilitating such collaborative processes. The authors also explore the tutor role in helping students apply their academic psychological learning to their own learning processes. The strength of this chapter lies in synthesizing the perspectives of students and tutors to recommend ways to make online teams work more effectively.

In Chapter 5 ("Facebook and Informal Learning") G. Callaghan and I. Fribbance use data from the OU's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Facebook page to illustrate how the social media platform can stimulate and encourage informal learning. In addition, the authors reflect on some of the challenges such platforms present for higher education faculty, including filter bubbles, data ownership and algorithmic control – though the *analysis remains somewhat superficial* and it mostly amounts to a mere restatement of well-known critiques.

Chapter 6 ("Creativity, Criticality and Engaging the Senses in Higher Education") by S. Sinclair discusses the role of creativity and multisensory learning in an online space and presents three case studies that illustrate how technology can be used to facilitate creative, multisensory learning and assessment in a distance education context. In one of the stronger contributions to this volume, Sinclair underlines the importance of providing students with opportunities to engage different senses and use different media in their learning and assessment, while also acknowledging the challenges of doing so at scale.

Chapter 7 by D.J. Pell departs from the preceding chapters which focus on teaching and learning practices to address online academic cheating, its growth, and various ways to combat this phenomenon. While the author's engagement with plagiarism lacks analytical depth and fails to develop a truly critical perspective on the issue, the typology of plagiarism in the UK context presented here will be of interest to those working on comparative studies across countries.

Chapter 8 ("The Challenges of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)") considers issues of learning design and audience engagement in the development of Massive Open Online Courses – MOOCs. In particular, the authors, G. Pike and H. Gore, draw on their experience of designing

a Forensic Psychology MOOC specifically with learner retention in mind using a serialized story-telling approach to maintaining learning engagement for the duration of the eight week course. The results presented show a generally positive impact of this approach, and a much higher completion rate than has generally been reported for MOOCs.

Chapter 9 by K. Foley and I. Fribbance examines the extent to which Student Connections, an initiative consisting of livestreamed interactive conferences and podcasts, developed a sense of community among students. It discusses some of the advantages and challenges of offering such services, and reflects on the potential of the online live event format for other higher education settings. It also provides detailed insight into the program's measurement and evaluation processes, which would be of interest to program managers and Academic Service staff looking to develop similar initiatives at their institution.

Another strong contribution, Chapter 10 ("Supporting Team Teaching of Collaborative Activities in Online Forums: A Case Study of a Large Scale Module") explores the mechanisms put in place for supporting a group of over 200 tutors delivering team teaching of pre-set online collaborative activities, in small teams, to over 3000 students in one first-year OU undergraduate psychology module. The authors, P. Cuffe and J. McAvoy, present a summary of the feedback gathered from the tutor forum along with student feedback and discuss how it informed the next iteration of the module. They also make recommendations for effective support of tutors conducting online team teaching of collaborative working by students. The chapter emphasizes the importance of facilitating and nurturing peer support in collaborative teaching environments, providing safe and productive spaces for the sharing of experience and ideas, as well as 'capturing' the knowledge produced in such spaces as a 'continuing resource' that can influence future iterations and designs.

Chapter 11 by M. Oldale and M. Knightley reflects on how to build successful relationships, instil values, and cherish identity in online teaching environments. The chapter turns from looking at online teams to investigating how individual tutors feel when they teach online. Adopting a deeply self-reflective tone, and using a blend of educational and psychological literature to back their ideas the authors explore whether online environments allow tutors to express their identity and values in ways which contribute to productive teaching relationships. The chapter shines at the end, where a brief yet robust series of practical strategies to support the online expression of identity in the service of rewarding and engaging teaching relationships is presented.

Strategically positioned last in this series of case studies, Chapter 12 ("The Move to Online Teaching: A Head of Department's Perspective") arguably constitutes the most interesting contribution to this volume. Written by an experienced educator and administrator, D. Preston, it tackles the contested issue of motivation in online teachers, challenging managerial discourses that suggest academics are resistant to change, unwilling to adopt emerging technologies, and slow to adapt to new social

and technological demands. The chapter presents the results of a case study investigating the experiences of a small group of academics involved in the redesign of a group of MBA electives within the OU's Business School – in particular, it examines how designing for an online platform differed from previous experiences of teaching in a face-to-face environment. Preston argues that, contrary to popular belief, there *is* motivation within the academic community to teach online, which should be properly supported through recognition of the different skills required for online teaching and appropriate training. Teaching online, moreover, presents a fundamental challenge to teacher identity, which must be factored into any practical training and development initiative.

The volume concludes with a brief reflection upon the main findings from the preceding Chapters, once again situating distance education in the context of neoliberal educational aims, policies, and processes. Arguably, over the last several decades, neoliberalism has reshaped the value and practice of higher education. Universities, along with other institutions previously valued as essential public goods, have been transformed as part of the market. Education has been re-envisioned as any other good or service, to be provided and delivered through market mechanisms that foster consumer-provider relationships. The practices and technologies of online and distance education, in particular, have often fallen prey to the neoliberal dogma of efficiency, cost effectiveness and the measurement of everything (Keehn, Anderson & Boyles 2018; Natalier & Clarke 2015).

However, the editors fail to make clear why neoliberalism is brought into focus, how the case studies presented here challenge or disrupt neoliberal norms (if that is the intention), or how critiques of neoliberal practices and policies in digital education may complement the socially oriented learning theories presented in this volume. This type of framing seems inconsistent, moreover, with the very content and context of the case studies, none of which explicitly address neoliberal political economy. If the intent is to juxtapose participatory, community-based and collaborative knowledge practices with the automated, mechanized and individualistic learning espoused by the neoliberal ethos, this is not made adequately clear. The volume would also have benefited from a clearer organization of its case studies, potentially around the themes of community, identity, scale, pedagogy, creativity, which are at the heart of the discussion presented.

Another limitation, is that the case studies presented are at this point 4–5 years old, and some of the discussion feels dated as a result (e.g., the discussion about Facebook). In addition, a lot of the challenges and opportunities discussed, as well as recommendations made, are based on the OU's unique model and large student numbers. For instance, several chapters (e.g., Chapter 3, 4 & 10) are focused on the perspectives, practices and experiences of OU tutors who act as facilitators in the running of online modules, and who are supervised by the 'central' academic who creates the online learning and pedagogic design and content. Recommendations by contributors to

this volume often assume a similar teaching context (e.g., 'Arrange a briefing day with all tutors. Use this to allow tutors to identify and discuss possible issues and jointly develop strategies for these.' p. 213).

The volume will, thus, be of interest primarily to those operating within similar parameters or those specifically interested in the OU's teaching models and pedagogical practices. Administrators in the process of developing large-scale online teaching programs, as well as course developers and instructional designers tasked with implementing such programs are likely to find plenty to muse over here. In fact, the volume's main strength lies in the insights it offers into the particular challenges of working with high population courses. For the seasoned online instructor, however, many of the suggestions and arguments presented here are likely to feel obvious. Those readers looking for recommendations on specific tools and technologies to use in their online classroom would also be better served elsewhere.

Review 3: *More than a Moment, Contextualizing the past, present, and future of MOOCS* (Steven D. Krause)

Review authored by: Gillian Ferguson, The Scottish Social Services Council, UK

Review of: Krause, S.D. (2019) *More than a Moment, Contextualizing the past, present, and future of MOOCS*, Utah: Utah State University Press. 168 pages. ISBN: 9781607327868 (paperback) 9781607327875 (ebook)

This short book provides a reflective overview of the trajectory of the MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) within the academic, social and political context of technology-enhanced learning. *More than a Moment, Contextualizing the past, present, and future of MOOCS* is a quick and easy read comprising five chapters. Its author Steven Krause is well placed to reflect on the above, drawing from his well-known work as co-editor of the *Invasion of the MOOCs: The Promises and Perils of Massive Open Online Courses* with Charles Lowe which emerged from a time when there was extreme disruption anticipated from the emergence of these courses (Krause and Lowe, 2014). Krause is Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Eastern Michigan University and develops discussion in this new work bringing his multiple perspectives as an academic, educator, student/user of MOOCs and as a socio-political observer. Along with a critically reflective account of the journey of the MOOC to date, the author directs our thinking towards central questions about the future.

The book is written in a conversational style and ideal for a reader who is already familiar with the conception of the MOOC and the broader educational technology field. Krause acknowledges this clearly in his introduction, along with the intended style he uses to craft the presentation of the ideas within the book. The introduction provides an important insight into the rationale for the book,

the starting point of the overall discussion and the position of the work within the field. Although short, the book is detailed in ideas about the perceptions and place of the MOOC and the associated discourse which has often minimised or misunderstood the phenomenon.

A brief outline of MOOCs is provided in its historical context, along with discussion about the tensions of defining such an entity in a way which does justice to their designs, scope and multiple uses. The discussion and examples within the book primarily take an American perspective; however this is set and linked to the essential global picture needed to understand the development of MOOCs, their subsequent journey and their possible future. The book starts with a discussion about MOOCs in the university context presenting a “*high altitude*” view which takes in their emergence, purposes and associated expectations. This does not however really go into the philosophy and spirit that led to the rise of the phenomenon and readers who are familiar with other work on the topic will perhaps relate more readily to the ideas. Setting MOOCs “*as a continuation of distance education technologies*” is helpful and re-centres the reader in chapter two. The boundaries of what is and is not a MOOC are explored along with discussion about the parallel transformation in adult education, correspondence education and distance education, although this most often relates to the American experience.

It is interesting to consider the experience of using MOOCs with a focus on the student experience where the potential and actual use of MOOCs may not have aligned. Krause quotes extensively from a personal blog relating to his own experience of undertaking a MOOC to present perspectives from the student voice. Threaded through the chapters are connections between changing higher and further educational developments including the anticipated customer of MOOCs. Cyclical debates about scalability, quality and credibility continue to feature across the landscape of digital learning design and are given their place in the discussion. MOOCs may have befallen the fate of other forms of technology-enhanced learning in general misunderstanding and therefore misalignment in purpose, potential and subsequent design.

The perpetual debate about face-to-face versus online learning is considered in chapter four as part of discussion of the faculty perspective of MOOCs. All forms of education need to have clear intent and well-designed material which can be supported by technology however the starting point remains what can the technology do rather than what do we want to achieve in many organisations. At the time of writing this book review there has been a massive pivot to online teaching which further muddies the water in relation to these issues of purpose and design.

The summative perspectives and questions posed within the book are helpful in considering the overall position and potential future of MOOCs. Krause presents his summary within the title of the final chapter, “*the present and fuzzy and difficult to predict future of MOOCs and beyond*” and the discussion therein. There are clear claims

for the overall success of MOOCs and their contribution to changing the discourse on and landscape of technology for learning. There is also a helpful discussion about the shift in emphasis from the dominant university-provider perspective with consideration of the tensions between the motivation of diverse providers across the profit and not-for-profit sectors. The idea is posed, that MOOCs may now not necessarily all be open, free or massive in their intentional design and subsequent use.

The idea that the MOOC is a brief moment in education and learning is debunked within the title of the book which gives a clear hint of what will be argued. There is more to the MOOC than initially meets the eye, and there is a clear opportunity to collectively learn from experiences to date. The book would appeal to readers interested in an appraisal of the position of MOOCs in the educational technology field and to those exploring how this links with social, economic and educational policy with a critical eye. The detail and perspectives within the book trigger a strong reminder that MOOCs have an important position to assist that collective learning. MOOCs may have always been disruptive and adaptive shapeshifters, and there are multiple issues that they can help us reflect on. The book can begin this reflective process for the reader and suggests the conversation ought to continue.

Review 4: *Social Media in Higher Education: Case Studies, Reflections and Analysis* (Chris Rowell)

Review authored by: Alison Fox, The Open University, UK

Review of: Rowell, C. (ed) (2019) *Social Media in Higher Education: Case Studies, Reflections and Analysis*, Cambridge, UK: OpenBook Publishers 304 pages ISBN 9781783746682. Available as an open access book at: <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0162>

This book is a gathering of social media enthusiasts, bringing together a wide range of thinking and experience about the role of forms of social media platforms, sites and tools in higher education. It is the product of social networking around a call using the Twitter hashtag #SocMed-inHE which used the affordances of Twitter and blogging to ‘crowd-source’ the contributions. Authors are working in twenty universities, are freelance academics/activists or work for JISC (a not-for-profit company whose role is to support post-16 and higher education and research). The book brings together librarians, educational technologists and academics working in and across a range of disciplines (including business, education, healthcare and the arts). In eight cases the authors’ expertise in making contributions to Higher Education learning and teaching has been recognised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), either as National Teaching Fellows or as Fellows or Senior Fellows. The authors are all active on social media platforms, with some widely recognised as digital leaders, driving practice forward and with several teaching courses based on their experience.

This collection examines social media using different lenses, such as focusing on addressing inequality, understanding political and popular culture, a drive for openness in education, developing pedagogy and informing professional development. What unites the contributors is their passion for understanding the past, current and potential role of social media within and for Higher Education. Interviews with the authors as a set of podcasts accompany the publication. Seventeen of these include the basis for chapter 2, made accessible through QR codes and embedded audios.

This book offers an energised but appropriately critical view, looking from both outside as well as within Higher Education practice contexts, to identify challenges and propose ways forward. The book is organised into seven thematic parts, followed by a useful glossary. Part one provides an introduction consisting of two chapters written by the book's editor Chris Rowell, which he uses to set the scene for the landscape of social media use in relation to Higher Education, including consideration of its impact. Part two takes up the subject of professional practice and covers four chapters linked to the practice of academic developers, curriculum designers and pedagogues. Part three, on teaching and learning, includes five chapters weighing up the opportunities and challenges for social media to be integrated into Higher Education learning and teaching. These, together, raise questions for practitioners to take forward. Part four, which addresses the topic of leadership, is composed of two chapters focusing on leadership which can and needs to be shown by Higher Education leaders. This includes those supporting and informing Higher Education, including JISC. In keeping with a book about social media, part five, about building networks, includes four chapters focusing on the social networking dimension to social media. This part of the book covers thinking about identity, belonging and connectedness within Higher Education courses, institutions and cross-institutional conference activity. In part six on innovation, four chapters take a more theoretical view to identify issues to be tackled if social media are to be embraced knowingly and transformatively. Their common strand is the practical and theoretical navigation of on and offline environments.

To conclude the book, part seven, entitled *The Personal Journey*, creates a space for two authors (A. Horton and N. Withnell) to reflect on their experiences of social media use personally and professionally. This includes an opportunity to bring a wellbeing perspective to the material covered. As well as a thematic reading, the authors offer other routes through the book using hashtags to help different kinds of reader to navigate particular paths through the book, for example for #Beginner, #Intermediate or #Advanced readers. There are also hashtags to identify key terms and platforms used at the start of each chapter, usually sought in an index, for example #identity, #youtube. These ideas for alternative approaches to using the book are especially useful in an ebook, within which a reader can use online search tools to follow tool-use or concept coverage.

Overall, as the first chapter claims, 'all of the chapters accentuate the positive aspects of social media but they also highlight some more difficult and contentious issues regarding this mode of communication, such as sexism, racism, homophobia, the pernicious presence of trolling and the abuse of power in these spaces' (p4). The book reflects on the main social media sites and tools considered to be most widely used in Higher Education contexts: Facebook (P. Kawachi, Z. Sujon, D. Webster, C. Challen), Twitter (M. Warnes, S. Koseoglu, Webster, MacMillan and C. Netantzi, P. Lockley, S. A. Vasant, A. Horton, N. Withnell), Snapchat (S. Gossain, J. Norris), WhatsApp (Z. Sujon), Medium (J. Blake, C. Millson and S. Aston), YouTube (S. Koseoglu) and podcasting (C. Rowell, D. Musson). The dominance of Twitter in the accounts reflects this not only as the leading platform but also that forming a growing focus for social media research in Higher Education contexts. The book also covers social media sites which have been appropriated from more popular culture in order to apply their utility in Higher Education contexts, such as Instagram (S. Gossain and J. Norris) and Pinterest (S. Gossain). The significance of the rise of student ownership of smartphones and the opportunities this affords is covered (A. Avramenko and C. Nerantzi, S. Gossain, D. Webster, D. Musson), as is the growing interest in microcredentialing moving from the valuing of physical to digital badges (M. Warnes, J. Norris). A reader is also introduced to less familiar concepts such as 'Twalks' (A. Middleton) and 'para-fictional objects' (J. Norris).

As noted earlier, the book is not intended to be a debate which is concluded within its pages but, rather, is offered as a stimulus to further reflection and analysis. In keeping with the Open Book Publishing Series there is an endnote entitled 'this book need not end here ...' with guidance on how the book and/or its chapters might be shared more widely, including the book publishers' social media links. Interestingly, Open Book Publishers offer a service where books or chapters can be combined and repackaged for different purposes. Given this open approach, the authors might have offered more encouragement in a practical sense on how social media channels could have continued the conversations.

In conclusion, I would say this collection achieves its aims to be a book inspired by social media in its format and style. The chapters are shorter than usual for an academic book, have a contemporary accessibility and relevance to practice similar to that found in blog posts and, whilst consciously limiting the reference lists to academic work, effectively direct a reader to sources of further information. Academic debates such as those about perceptions and experiences of privacy, identity and power are woven throughout the book, whilst keeping attention to practical recommendations for designers, teachers and leaders in Higher Education. Be prepared to be challenged, entertained and inspired.

Review 5: *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy* (Sean Michael Morris and Jesse Stommel)

Review authored by: Brenna Clarke Gray, Thompson Rivers University, British Columbia, CA

Review of: Morris, S. M. & Stommel, J. (2019), *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy*. Hybrid Pedagogy, Open Access: <https://criticaldigitalpedagogy.pressbooks.com/> ISBN 9780692152690.

At this particular time with countries in pandemic lockdown, it feels a bit like cheating to write a book review of *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Digital Pedagogy*, a collection of brief interventions on a range of issues related to digital teaching. As all educators suddenly find themselves negotiating the world of online course delivery, regardless of their previous experience or current comfort level, many of us are turning to Morris and Stommel, among other digital pedagogues, for ideas, inspiration, confidence and support. To tell readers that this book is exactly as necessary for this moment as the title suggests seems too obvious. But it is also true.

The essays in this collection, authored jointly and individually by Morris and Stommel, range in length from a few paragraphs to a dozen pages and offer self-contained consideration that will help reframe thinking and reshape practice. These essays have something to say about when to say no to technology ('Is It Okay to Be a Luddite?'), about why traditionally-conceived online learning feels so staid to learners ('The Discussion Forum Is Dead; Long Live the Discussion Forum'), and how our understanding of new forms of communication necessarily impacts the old ('The Twitter Essay'). Morris and Stommel offer interventions into key issues for those who teach online, or those who support that work; moreover, the essays themselves are written to engage and enlighten in a quick burst, so you can read about what is wrong with discussion forums and then return to figuring out how to fix yours. And among the welcome gems in this book is an introductory note from Audrey Watters, whose voice opens the book with a reminder that will be oft-recited throughout the collection: we must centre the human, and resist the rest.

But readers who can commit to the whole collection are rewarded by seeing Morris and Stommel's thinking evolved over time. These essays are primarily reprints of content from their co-founded digital journal *Hybrid Pedagogy* and other venues, and they collect work spanning twenty years. The scope of this collection makes clear Morris and Stommel's consistent point that critical digital pedagogy is not about the tools, but about the questions, and indeed that the questions become ever more persistent over time. At times, I longed for a bit more context, even just dates and sources of original publication to fall alongside the essays. With this said, my most pleasurable moments as a reader come when now-Morris and now-Stommel interject briefly in these older pieces. But in the end by not contextualizing each piece, readers are left

with a holistic view of education at the opening of the twentieth century. *Plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose*.

It is also a delightfully readable selection of pieces. Morris and Stommel are notable for their ability to take higher-order concepts in pedagogy and critical theory and explore them in conversational tones that are accessible to anyone who cares about teaching and learning; indeed, a major strength of this collection is its primary focus on care and how we enact it in digital learning spaces. This concern with care includes students, adjunct and underpaid faculty, support staff, and the larger community within which the institution is positioned. For example, essays entitled 'How to Build an Ethical Online Course' and 'On Presence, Video Lectures, and Critical Pedagogy' invite readers to think about how care is enacted and community constructed with intention in these modalities. It is, indeed, with urgency that we should take these ideas to heart as we and our colleagues teach through a period where our own discomfort and challenges to our orthodoxies must be acknowledged alongside an awareness of the needs of our learners that now, more than ever, will necessarily extend to the pastoral.

By far the strongest section of essays in *An Urgency of Teachers* is the final one, entitled Action, which highlight where the emergent battlefields of educational technology are to be found. These essays advocate passionately for contingent faculty ('Vulnerability, Contingency, and Advocacy in Higher Education'), community colleges ('A Manifesto for Community Colleges, Lifelong Learning, and Autodidacts'), and students ('Dear Chronicle: Why I Will No Longer Write for Vitae') and remind us that education is activism. This section of the book also offers practical tools for resistance ('A Guide for Resisting Edtech: The Case Against Turnitin') and in praise of open ('Textbooks, OER, and the Need for Open Pedagogy'). Here readers find Morris and Stommel at their most hopeful and their most unflinching, and here is set out a moral standard for educational technologists, instructional designers, and teachers. I have turned to these essays individually over my career to build my arguments and buoy my spirits, and reading them all here together in one place was a reminder of the years of work that have gone in to uncovering an ethical and inspiring approach to teaching alongside technology. When in doubt, Morris and Stommel remind me, do the work.

An Urgency of Teachers is relevant to anyone working in learning technologies or, indeed, working *with* learning technologies, because it asks us to think further than what is expedient or immediate and reminds us of what is so critical in our work: our learners. Morris and Stommel consistently eschew rehashes of debates over the roles of specific technologies and tools, and indeed the well-hewn path of so-called best practices, to instead insist that we ask difficult ethical questions of those tools and practices. It is tempting, and sometimes feels inevitable, to rush into new agreements with sparkling new technologies when the job of getting our courses online feels so enormous. But the urgency here is in remembering the critical questions, especially the ones that seem larger than we can

be expected to address at present, which will sustain our practice long after our need for the new toy has passed. If your workday looks anything like mine right now, the panicked pace makes it hard to resist, challenge, and change. But taking a few moments to dip in and out of this book will help recharge your batteries and remind you of why the work we do is worth the fight.

This is not to say I agree with every word in this collection. Often, I find myself arguing with the pages of this book, agreeing, for example, that most rubrics miss the point, but if I work with someone who is new to the idea of sharing rubrics with students in advance, do I want to shut that conversation down? That is, what about real life situations? As Morris self-consciously warns us in 'What Is a Pedagogue?', sometimes the pedagogue frustrates the practitioner; as practitioners, we often seek concrete answers to concrete questions, where the pedagogue wants us to take time to meditate on the question itself. Indeed, as we frantically support this transition to online learning for so many, the lack of attention to practical solutions in this collection may be infuriating at first blush, but it is also both intentional and critical. Spending time with *An Urgency of Teachers* underscored for me the value of ensuring our increasingly precarious institutions make space for those to whom, as Morris describes, if we offer 'patience,' will arrive at the 'solutions which, years after she implements them in her own classroom, become the habit and tradition of brand new teachers' (14). This is how we all progress.

An Urgency of Teachers is aspirational in the best sense of the word: it pushes us all, no matter what quarter of education we work in, to try to be better. In so doing, it also challenges all of us who work with the digital in a classroom context of our own failings. In that way, this breezy, engaging read is often surprisingly difficult to wrestle with. Morris and Stommel expect a lot from all of us and invite us to 'move from impossibility to impossibility together' (297). If there is a more apt rallying cry, a more urgent call to arms for this particular moment in the history and future of digital pedagogy, I cannot think of it. Given patience, I suspect Morris and Stommel will.

Competing Interests

A declaration of competing interest must be declared for Review 1, as one of the co-authors of the book being

reviewed, Eileen Scanlon, is an Associate Editor for JIME. She was not part of the editorial process for any part of this review.

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