Hello and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital for the whole TRU community. I'm your host Brenna Clarke Gray, coordinator of educational technologies, and this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning, but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcú'ecw, where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And today's episode is about voices, particularly about bringing other voices into the classroom, both to support you and your work and to support your students and their learning. So well, let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I have a show notes every week that I've prepared before I sit down to talk. But for the most part, this is off the cuff. I know you're shocked, right? The level of polish, and she's doing it off the top of her head. But my notes today say don't mention being tired because I was listening back to some past episodes to check something. And I talked to you about being tired a lot. So I'm not going to mention being tired. What I am going to mention is that there is value in inviting other voices into your classroom to talk to your students. Now, I know that you know that right -- guest speakers are great, but I think guest speakers, or, you know, even films, podcasts, other ways of bringing voices, sort of into your classroom in a multidimensional way, more than in just a reading, it can also re-energize and reinvigorate your teaching and your students' learning.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think I've said this before, but something I always used to do when I was teaching a heavy teaching load is I always made sure that in week eight and nine, we either did a film or I had a guest speaker, but I brought someone else into the classroom to talk for a bit because it was my experience that, you know, by the time we got to week eight and week nine, everybody was sick of me -- half the time I was sick of me by week eight or week nine. The reason I want to talk about this in particular today is because I've had a few conversations with folks who are surprised at how much this semester seems to be dragging already. I am not surprised by this. I think most of us rolled into this semester still on the verge of burnout. You can take a couple weeks off at Christmas, but, A, you were probably still thinking about your teaching the whole time, and B, it's not enough to make up for the weeks and weeks and weeks of burning the candle at both ends that you did in the fall.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And also it's January. January sucks, man. I mean, November sucks, but you've kind of got this break in the distance. You've got your eye on the prize for which, you know, for many of us is not really a break break, but it's something to look forward to. January man. Oh, woof. I don't know about you, but I just looked at my Reading Break and it is already so full of meetings that that's not something I'm like looking forward to as like a holiday. My kiddos birthday's coming up. That's pretty exciting and fun, but it's not a rest. January stinks. I think we're coming up to blue Monday. I think it's the 18th this year, or maybe the 25th, that Monday, which is apparently like the most depressing day in the calendar. It's probably not very helpful to think in those terms, but I do think it's okay to acknowledge that January is a hard month for a lot of people. So we're kind of already down and out before we get started. And that's, that's a complicated place to be in for our teaching because we need to have energy. We need to be buoyed.

We need to be engaged. And this is a place where I think guest speakers or film, video, other voices can be incredibly valuable.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

There are a lot of things that are bad about pandemic teaching, but one thing that is really unambiguously great about pandemic teaching is that it's super easy to bring guest speakers into your classroom on a technical level. You can't have guest speakers in your Moodle space necessarily unless they're TRU employees, but you can use our forward-facing Big Blue Button to invite guests into your classroom. I'll share a link to that in the show notes. It's a resource not everyone knows about. And I know I try not to get too technical on the show, but except that I totally did last week, but the forwardfacing Big Blue Button is a game changer for lots of people. It allows you to generate a persistent link that students or guest speakers or colleagues can use to meet with you. We've had great luck with helping people use that for their office hours so that they don't have to have one office hour in each Moodle shell. They can have a shared office hour across all of their classes. I'll link to some resources, but also never hesitate to send a note to moodlesupport@tru.ca if you want help setting up your Big Blue Button that way. So we have mechanisms, right? And the great thing is you don't have to pay travel expenses. You don't have to get someone to stay overnight in Kamloops, which, you know, that's an ask. Depending on the time of year, right? Particularly in January. I think that we have this great moment where in many ways, access to expertise feels very equitable to me right now. I've gone to a bunch of really amazing webinars this week. Some free, some that I paid for, but all of them world-class speakers, who I wouldn't have had the opportunity to get to if we weren't forcing everything into the digital or into the fully online. I think we should take advantage of that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And I think we can think creatively about what makes someone an expert in our discipline. Have you read a particularly phenomenal mindblowing blog post recently, maybe it's by an emerging scholar in your field who would really like the opportunity to address a group of students about their work. I bet they'd be happy to come and talk to your students and you'll have that energizing presence. We also have the opportunity right now to do asynchronous guest lectures, right? You could interview someone over Big Blue Button and save that recording and provide it to your students at a later date when it fits into the course curriculum, or just because the speaker's timing didn't match your own.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The value of having someone else's voice in the classroom, I think is multi-fold. It allows you to reinforce your own messages about your discipline. And I'm thinking beyond content here, I'm thinking about how we articulate disciplinary norms. How do we communicate in our disciplines? It can be really powerful to have a guest speaker who reiterates the same kinds of norms as you try to in your classroom.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The other thing that guest speakers do, and this is sometimes more useful at the upper undergraduate and graduate levels, is to challenge your readings of texts or your readings of concepts, right? How great to have a guest speaker disagree with you and let your students really think about the multiple perspectives on the issue. These are all things that can have a wildly energizing impact on your students' experiences. And in this moment, when we're being mediated by technology, it's one way we can take advantage of what is a complex on troubling approach to education. Right now, I'm thinking about this in particular, because I know how much I valued the opportunities to hear people in my discipline

outside of people at my university, when I was a student, it helped me to really understand in my case what an English degree was and what it could potentially open up in terms of pathways for me.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm also thinking, because I know how useful it can be to think about different ways to use classroom time, particularly when we are being so conscious and concerned about burnout. And the fact is there are so few genuinely great opportunities about what's happening to us right now that maybe we should embrace the ones we have. So I'm really encouraging you to think about bringing additional voices into your classroom this week.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And you know, it doesn't actually have to be people from outside the institution. I know the folks at career services love having the opportunity to talk to students. I betcha there's lots of folks in student services who would like to get in front of your classroom. And I know for sure the librarians love getting in touch with your students. I know that so clearly that I invited one here today to talk to you. Erin May from the library is here to talk to you about the kinds of support resources that the library can offer to your students, but also to you in this complex time. So I'm going to let Erin explain it all.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm here today with Erin May. Erin, I always ask folks to introduce themselves and then let people know where they might have seen them on campus when we still went to campus. Would you mind introducing yourself?

Erin May:

Sure. Hi, I'm Erin May. I'm a reference and instruction librarian at TRU and I'm also the scholarly communications librarian. You've probably seen me the most either if you're in one of my liaison areas. So I'm responsible for education and social work and sociology and anthropology. So I've come into lots of different classes and I'm also just around the library and probably at Common Grounds.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Common Grounds. You know, I was thinking about them the other day. I miss the Starbucks lineup too, just because you always bump into someone you haven't talked to in awhile. So that's super fun, but the coffee's better at Common Grounds. And I love just sitting, looking at the window for long periods of time.

Erin May:

Yes, for sure.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I feel like there's not enough meandering about in my life, in the post pandemic era. Like I never, I just sit at my desk and then walk down to my kitchen and then walk back up to my desk.

Erin May:

My kitchen is like five feet from my desk. So I go even less distance.

Hey, it's I didn't realize how much I missed, you know, just campus happenstance until I didn't have it anymore. Now I miss it a lot.

Erin May:

I know. I never thought I would miss smalltalk, but here we are.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's so true. I was realizing like we have all our meetings are so focused. It's just, there's not a lot of, I don't know, hanging around chatting time. So I guess I'm recording it for everybody.

Erin May:

Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Erin off the top, you talked about how people might know you from your classroom visits. Can you talk a little bit about how your work has changed since we've moved to fully online delivery?

Erin May:

Yeah, sure. So what I normally would do is go into people's classes for about an hour or so to talk about library research. And this is for -- most of the librarians will do this. So I tend to go into the education graduate classes or social work research classes and talk to students about you know, how to find resources for their assignments and kind of come up with better topics and everything like that. So I'm still kind of doing that by going into online classes. So sometimes I'll go in quote in-person to a class and join a Big Blue Button or a Teams class. But we've also been trying to mix that up a little bit because it's hard enough in person to talk to students for an hour about how to do library research. It's never the most exciting I would say. And that's when we often have a lab environment. So we'll be in a computer lab if we can, or students will have their laptops so we can take breaks, you know, to do some practice so that students can get an idea of what works and what doesn't. And I found that really hard to do virtually because often the student's whole screen is taken up with their class. So you can't, it can be really hard to kind of go to another tab to do research, and then we're all sitting there in the classroom and it's really quiet and awkward.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah.

Erin May:

So we've all been kind of doing different things. Something that I've been doing is prerecording my kind of library talks which I like, because then I can edit it. So I always sound like I know what I'm talking about. And then skin listen to that before class. And then when I do come into quote, come into the classroom we use that for more question and answer time so that if students had a chance to practice on their own, or if they have questions about their own specific topic, then I can address those or demonstrate things that I maybe missed or that people are still confused about. And that that's kind of been a lot more valuable because then like I'm actually addressing what questions there are instead of talking to people or talking at people for an hour,

It's actually the exact model of how we hope people will deliver content, to be honest. Yeah. Like anything that's, you know, relatively one-sided where you just have to communicate content to students. I really do think that's best done asynchronously because you can edit it. They can watch bits of it several times. And then when they have the live session, that's the great time to yeah. Ask questions, dig in, figure out what the sticky points were and really go over them. That's like, it's like letter perfect delivery structure, Erin. It's great.

Erin May:

Like, it's also nice because some people will tell me, and it's really nice to hear this, that they really appreciate the librarian relationship with students. So I still get to have that and like talk to people in the class. And I like to tell people how non-threatening I am and that they can always come and ask me for help. I really don't mind. So I still kind of get to have that communication too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Interesting, it's something that I found really valuable when I was teaching faculty, was that research relationship that students developed with the librarians for exactly that like, not just that you're not threatening, but you're not in an evaluative position. Right? Like you might have a small assignment as part of a library session, but you're not evaluating their whole like term paper. And so the ability to ask you questions that students might feel are like, you know, that they don't feel comfortable asking faculty because they think it's going to reflect badly on their final project. Like, I think librarians are a critical sort of para-instructional component of students having a place to go to ask those kinds of questions. So it's good to know that that work is still happening even in the the virtual.

Erin May:

Yes. I found that like normally I would have like many, many students coming to my office to ask me for help and we'd have like an hour long consultation. And now that's mostly turned into email questions. I think, because for me personally, I have lots of graduate students who are international students in my area. So they might be at home or like weird time zones and stuff like that. So we do lots of more email questions, but I hope that that relationship can still be there even if they're not meeting me personally, because yeah, it is nice to ask someone who's not your professor for help and like bounce some ideas off and you don't have to worry if like you're getting marked on the conversation kind of thing.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Email workload must be a lot for you though. Like that's a lot of --

Erin May:

Yeah, it can be I think I'm getting a bit better at it because I have done so many at this point. So, you know, there's bits that I don't tend to copy and paste like email outlines kind of, because I find that just doesn't work for me, but it, sometimes it is often the same email just with different keywords pasted in. Right.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I guess the problems and issues are sort of the same, even if the circumstance or the topic is a little bit different. Yeah, exactly. That's really interesting. So I wonder as we've switched to this virtual

delivery, I'm thinking about how the library can serve as support. We sort of talked about how it acts as support for students. I'm wondering how, I mean, feel free to talk more about the support for students angle. I'm also curious about the support for faculty in the fully online space, as we've all sort of changed our working parameters.

Erin May:

So some of that is the same as what we have for students. So like, just like how I help the students in like education and social work. I'm also there for those faculty members as well. So if you're doing research in any kind of area, you can always ask your librarian for help, just like you would tell your students to ask the librarian for help. We're definitely able to help everybody.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, I haven't started harassing the librarians here, but I used to be a giant pain in the ass to the librarians at Douglas. So I mean, I believe very strongly in annoying librarians with lots of questions.

Erin May:

Yes. Because, and then like that helps you. That helps us. It's great to know what people are doing for research on campus. I was doing some collections this morning, so I was like looking for books to potentially buy. And then if people have asked me lots of questions about their research, those might stick in my brain and I'll be like, Oh, this book might help so-and-so with your research.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I also find it's useful modelling for students to not imagine that research is this solo endeavour, right? Like we would never expect our students to sit down and write a research paper without help from the instructor, the library and the writing center. Right? Like there's all these pieces that go into place. And then I think sometimes we sit down to do our writing and we're like, no, now I must achieve this all on my own. So modelling the idea of a research community can involve establishing a research community yourself within the institution. Right.

Erin May:

And like, even if you're not sure if it is something we can help you with we tend to be very helpful people just like stereotypes of librarians in general. So like, even if we're not the right person to help you with that we can usually direct you to the right person or some resources online or, you know, have you'll walk away with something. We're not just going to say no, bye.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice. Yeah. I've never met a librarian who just was like, I don't know. See you later. You guys tend to like finding answers. It seems to be like a pretty, pretty significant personality trait.

Erin May:

Yes. It might be. It's a stereotype for a reason. So.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, what other ways do you find you're stepping into support faculty through this particularly strange period?

Erin May:

So something that comes to mind it's with course reading lists and textbooks. So TRU has a pretty strong open educational resource community. I know. Right. so there are like Brenda Smith, the open education librarian is always working with people to help create OERs and find OERs. So we can definitely help with that. And especially if you're trying to find ways, also, it always goes back to helping students, but like helping them not spend hundreds of dollars on textbooks and then maybe finding better content as well for your class. Cause you can like pick and choose from different OERs, different chapters that will work instead of having to be stuck with this one big textbook.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. And I'm guessing that's particularly helpful in a fully virtual delivery. The more resources students can be provided just like within their Moodle shell or be able to access from the Moodle shell the better I would think.

Erin May:

Exactly. And then that's something that we can do with the course reading list service as well, which is something that's pretty new. So if you have your course reading lists with, you know, different articles that you want students to read or like book chapters and things like that, we can, if you submit it, there's a place on the library website to submit your course reading list and then we'll get the permalinks to articles in the library. We can even like scan some book chapters or if you have like scanned things that you can send to us as well, we can kind of get that all into one list and then that can be embedded into Moodle so that everything is --

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Wow. That's really cool. I didn't, I mean, I knew that there was like a course reading service, but I didn't really think about how it works. That's fantastic.

Erin May:

It's pretty cool. Yeah. And it does -- we have some instructions on how to embed it into the Moodle shell. Yeah, I think it's really cool. And I just think of how great that would have been when I was a student to like, not be spending all my time searching for my articles because I wasn't very good at that as an undergraduate student,

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Neither was I, and I remember I had this one instructor in, I guess fourth year and in fairness, I guess by fourth year, you're supposed to know how to use the library, but I didn't. And he used to just give us the name of the article and he was like, go find it like that's part of your job is to track down the readings. And, you know, in retrospect that that's a useful skill to develop, but at the time, Oh, it just made me mad. It was so much work. I was like, I just wanted to -- so you could never leave your readings for that class to the last minute. Cause you'd be totally screwed because this was back in the days, not to wildly date myself, but this was back in the days when you may have to go and like physically retrieve the article and photocopy it. Oh gosh. Erin, I want to ask you about something else that's in your purview and I totally didn't prompt you about this because I only just thought of it. Now, if you might want to talk a little bit about TRUSpace and the digital repository because I'm guessing as more and more people are doing more and more like conferences online, we have more and more digital artifacts that maybe people should be thinking about how they want to save and hang on to.

Erin May:

Yes. I'm glad you asked about that because I have been getting more people in the last few months asking about storing their conferences or proceedings or like their articles in TRUSpace. So if, if people haven't heard of TRUSpace, it's our institutional repository. So we have lots of different documents about TRU's history and faculty publications, open access and student theses, and hopefully soon more other kinds of student -- we're trying to get more great research that students are doing in there. And then yeah. Conference proceedings as well.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I, the reason I met you was when I was setting up the, the Academic Integrity Day last fall, like a year ago fall we needed to come up with a repository and yeah, you, you are the librarian who does that. And it was a fantastic experience. Actually, it was really straightforward. We ended up just providing you with our files. That was that. And now we have this great archive space of that day. And it's such a neat, I think it's a neat archive. I mean, I, I built it, so I like shouldn't take too much credit, but like, you know, we archive all the tweets from the day. So we have all that in one spot and we can point people to it. In the case of academic integrity, it's a really nascent research area in Canada. Like there's just, people have not saved this kind of work. And so it was really exciting to know that we were, you know, creating an archive that would be open and accessible and that would contribute to an area where there's just not enough of that happening.

Erin May:

Like things in TRUSpace can be found on Google. So like it's a way better place for people to be able to find these resources, especially for something like this. And even if it's an article that you've published in on, in another journal that if your open access policies, allow it, you can also have it in TRUSpace. We can add all kinds of stuff. So like if there's something that we don't have in there that doesn't mean we can't have it, no one else just might've thought of it. So

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like to think we're the first people who archived tweets with you. I mean, it was only a CSV file, but I was still really proud of it.

Erin May:

And memes, I think you're the first.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes we also have a giant file of memes. I think that I like what you said about student research. Like I could really see, I think people are thinking more and more about open pedagogies and authentic assessment. It would be really cool to have undergraduates in particular contributing to the body of knowledge in their field and archiving their work in a space like TRUSpace.

Erin May:

Yeah, absolutely. I love seeing there is some undergraduate stuff with UREAP the I can't remember what it stands for, but it's like the undergraduate research program. I forget what the E and the A are, but yeah, so there's some undergraduate research from there and honours theses. And if a student in a class

writes a particularly good paper or does a really good project, you can faculty can sponsor their work to be added to TRUSpace.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, cool.

Erin May:

So, and then we'll add it and then that can be there kind of like the same way that you might recommend a student project for the conference.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So if a faculty member wanted to pursue that, would they start with an email to you? Or is there a process that they go through?

Erin May:

Yeah, we have a form that's sponsorship of student work for TRUSpace. That's on the website, but you can always, definitely just email me and then I can help you set that up as well. Cause it will go through me anyways.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that idea. I'm more and more realizing, you know, the amount of time that students put into work to what some of us and teaching and learning circles call disposable assignments. Right. Which is the assignment that like you write the essay, you hand the essay in, you get the essay back, you put the essay in a recycling bin, right. And how much time and labor is really wasted through that process. And that's intellectual work. That's not in the commons, right. It's just in a recycling bin somewhere. And also I think the idea of I can just imagine as a student and particularly as an undergraduate student, how validating it would have felt for me to have a faculty member say, this is really good. And I'd like to archive it like, Whoa.

Erin May:

Yeah, for sure. That would feel, feel great. And that you kind of like that your work that you did meant something, it wasn't just something that you did because you had to.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Oh, wow. This is so cool. I didn't even think of that as an option. You know, normally when we talk about this, we're thinking about e-portfolios or sort of open web projects, but this is a whole 'nother way of thinking about retaining student work and making it public and accessible.

Erin May:

And one of the things with TRUSpace that's not really related to student work, but I just thought of it. And I wanted to mention is that we do use it to -- we can use it to store data as well in an open way. So if, if your grant says that you need to store data or like archive your data open access after you publish your paper and you're looking for a place to do that, then we can use TRUSpace for that, to, for that. Yeah.

Yeah. Because more and more, I mean, the Tri-Council in particular, right? Your grant is not only predicated on open access dissemination of the research, but also open access storage and retention of the data. So that is really cool. I'm such a fan of librarians in general. I just think in a different life, I'm sure people tell you that all the time in a different life, I would have been a librarian, but --

Erin May:

I would actually believe that with you though.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I have a very librarian sensibility. Is there anything else you want people to know either students or faculty about the work that you do or the support that's available through the library?

Erin May:

Those are really the big things right now that I can think of. The main thing is that we're still open, even if our building is closed and basically everything that we would normally do, we're doing in some fashion somehow, whether it's online or through Blue Jeans or whatever. So basically, yeah, just always feel free to get in touch with us because we're, we're still here, everybody!

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that. I love the locker system by the way, for borrowing physical items. It's so cool. It's so cool. And it's so innovative. I haven't seen that many institutions moving to a system like that. It makes so much sense.

Erin May:

I think we were planning on doing something like that anyways, and then it kinda got sped up a bit with this whole need for contactless services.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's interesting. How if a library is part of your life, life circumstances really do change how you use it. Like I had never used the hold function at the public library before I had a kid. And then once I did, it was like, I don't have time. Like I, and not even that I didn't have time, but that it's not a good use of my time in the library anymore to go and browse through the shelves. And I'd rather spend that time, like letting my kiddo poke through the kids' section, but I don't want to stop using the library. So I kind of became an obsessive holds user as a result. And yeah, now sometimes I have absolutely obscene library checkouts, but I think that the the, the, like the contactless takeout service that you guys are doing is a good example of that. Right. Life circumstances still changed, but the resources of the library are available. It's just fantastic.

Erin May:

And then like in the future, like in that so-called post pandemic world, if you're, you know,

Brenna Clarke Gray:

If we believe in that.

Erin May:

If you're on campus, you know, super early or later than the libraries, but you want to pick up your book like that's outside, so you can still do that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I can see. Yeah. I can see it being a really good resource for like students who are also parents or students who are also working difficult schedules. Like it's so good to see all of the resources on campus, really trying to meet students where they're at. If we retain one thing from the, the pandemic period in the supposedly after times that I don't actually believe in, I hope it's that. I hope it's that willingness to be flexible to student needs.

Erin May:

Yeah. That flexibility, I think, has been really helpful for us to be more recognizing of everybody's life circumstances. So I hope that stays as well.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, absolutely. I really love seeing kids and pets on conference calls and I hope that that never stops.

Erin May:

Me too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, thanks so much for taking the time to come and chat with me today, Erin. I really appreciate it.

Erin May:

Oh, you're welcome. Thanks for having me on.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Take care.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for episode 17 of You Got This! As always if you want to write to us you can email me. I'm bgray@tru.ca. I'm also on Twitter @brennacgray. And in both cases that's Gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis.trubox.ca. Of course, you can always comment on individual episodes there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip. I have kind of big teaching tip, which is go forth and find a guest voice for your classroom. But, you know, depending on where you're at in your lesson prep right now, you might just think Brenna, that is more work than I am willing to do right now, than I have time to do right now. Please stop talking to me. So fair. My Tiny Teaching Tip for you is to go and check out the forward-facing Big Blue Button. We call it Greenlight. And it's going to give you some new and different ways to use video conferencing in your classroom that might really help with your workflow. I promise, these teaching tips. I don't intend them to be so technical, but they have been for

the last two weeks. Last week, I think it was go learn Moodle 3.9 and this week it's go learn Big Blue Button, but I field a lot of questions every day, as you know, and there's definitely a lot of questions that could be solved by a more efficient or careful use of Big Blue Button. So that's my recommendation. This week, you'll find some links and also a link to a really great tutorial made by one of our colleagues in the show notes today. So that's it: go forth and learn the video conferencing software better. By the way, like I'm touching wood as I say this, but people-- Big Blue Button's kind of killing it. Hey, it's like, it's doing really well. So, you know, go learn it, learn to trust again. And until next time. We'll talk soon. Bye.