

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hi, pals. And welcome to You Got This!, and thanks for bearing with us through an unexpected hiatus. I'm back now. And I was going to re-cut and rerecord segments of the episode you're about to hear today but in the interest of extending grace and kindness to myself and modeling a practice that I encourage of you all the time, I'm not going to do that. I think the episode is worth listening to, as it is. We're going to make reference to some workshops that are either in the past or didn't end up happening due to my unexpected absence. I've been away from campus for about a month, dealing with a family emergency, and I didn't take my microphone with me. So that explains the hiatus. Thanks for your patience. I hope you'll still enjoy today's episode.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

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 it's Open Ed Week. Open Ed Week is like Christmas and Thanksgiving and Valentine's day. I don't know. It's a bunch of holidays rolled into one for your friendly local educational technologist. Who's a little bit obsessed with open. I thought I'd start today by talking a little bit about some of the events that Open Ed Week this week, both here at TRU and elsewhere. But I also want to talk about the ethos of open and why it matters to me so much.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Open Education Week is a celebration of all things Open Education. I obviously love open educational resources and projects that mobilize knowledge in open ways. I think it's really important that the work we do at publicly funded institutions is made publicly accessible. That matters to me a lot. It matters to me on philosophical grounds, but it also just matters to me because I don't understand what the point is of doing this work and not having it be out in the open. I'm going to include a link in the show notes today to some of the great stuff that's happening at Open Education Week. We've got discussions about creative commons and how to even just get started with using open education resources, why you might want to build an OER textbook or an OER resource for students. I'm giving a couple of talks this week as if you don't hear enough of my voice between this podcast and office hours. But I'm giving a talk on Tuesday with Brian Lamb. It's a re up, I guess, a Redux version of the talk we gave last year about sort of the corporatization of educational technology and how us -- and by us I mean faculty and faculty knowledge and academic staff and academic staff data and academic staff learning and knowledge and student data and student learning and knowledge -- how all of these things are monetized by powers beyond our control. We're going to talk about that and then I'm giving a talk also with Brian the next day on Wednesday, about open approaches to knowledge mobilization, which is a key term I like to throw around a lot because I'm hoping SSHRC will notice that I say it all the time. But it's about podcasting and blogging and ways to share your research out in the open and also ways to establish or connect with an open research community. I know a lot of us with the absence of conference travel are feeling a bit unmoored from our scholarly communities. So I'm going to show you some open projects that might help you to feel more connected to your community of the mind. Shall we say. I'm going to include links

to a whole bunch of great talks, things that I think you should check out this week in the show notes, I'll give you kind of my dream schedule, tell you what the things I want to be at are.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I want to talk to you about why I think open is so important in this particular moment, because I can't think of a more urgent issue than the cost of education or the sense of who has access to it. And openness is really an opportunity to address both of these things. We've been talking about open and OER a lot on campus lately as part of the discourse around VitalSource, which I'm happy to say, I think we might have some breathing room on. We might be able to imagine other futures for materials procurement at the university than yet another private corporation -- fingers crossed. When we talk about open though, we need to be talking about much more than textbooks. The thing I am most interested in, to be honest, is open pedagogy and particularly public pedagogy. I'm interested in how we take what we know about our disciplines and talk about them. Take them out into the open build discourse around them that people can engage with the public funds, our work in really concrete material ways, right? The public funds our SSHRC and NSRC and CHIR grants. The public funds our salaries, the public subsidizes our students' tuition. The public has a right to access the material that we build within the walls of the institution. And I really do believe in that as an ethical imperative to the work that we do.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like to think about this in terms of open pedagogy, rather than some of the other language that goes around --knowledge mobilization being one phrase -- because I think that knowledge mobilization or open scholarship or public scholarship without the pedagogy component is ultimately kind of pointless. Right? When we teach, we offer contextual information, we make material relevant, we help the learner connect to what it's about and what it means to them. I increasingly believe that just making our data, our conclusions, our research available isn't enough. It's our job, as people with the privilege to do this work, to also translate it, to make it relevant, to make it engaging and to make it accessible.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Open access journals are great. I serve on the editorial board of one, The Comics Grid, my beloved disciplinary journal. And I believe in them, I believe in their mission. I think, I think all knowledge should be openly accessible, but open access journals serve people often who are already in the ecosystem of post-secondary. Right? So by the time you're looking to open access journals, certainly with some really valid exceptions, maybe your, a faculty member at a school that doesn't have a lot of resources, or maybe you're an independent scholar, or maybe you're a student who doesn't want to do their library login, right? There's lots of reasons we go for open access journals, but a journal itself is still a fairly cloistered space. Again, with some notable exceptions, there are lots of journals who are trying to engage in public scholarship and trying to engage in open pedagogy, but just making the material available isn't enough. The reason that I believe so strongly in open education as a movement is because it's about taking the research, the scholarship, the data, all that, you know, quote unquote pure stuff and making it meaningful. And that's a skill, right? One of the things that I think gets elided when we get directives for openness, like say for example, really well-meaning and I think ultimately very positive moves from the Tri-Council, for example, to require that our scholarship be openly disseminated, that our data be openly stored. I think those things are really good, but I think that they're not enough. I think that if we don't pair that with some professional development and some training around how to communicate, whether it's in the sciences or the social sciences or the humanities, there's no monopoly

in the humanities on communicating ideas. Clearly. I promise you. Without that work, I'm not sure there's much good in everything being out in the open.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We live in this moment of information overload -- go online to research a topic and you're inundated, right? And as we've seen all over the world, the advent of quote unquote fake news, of untrustworthy sources, of undisclosed bias -- I don't think there's any such thing as an unbiased source, but you know, you can disclose or not disclose -- all of these things make information management really complicated and difficult. As staff and faculty and students at a university, we have this uniquely privileged role to play in helping to communicate knowledge in a way that makes sense. And from a position of social trust. And I, I mean, you can accuse me of being a Pollyanna and sometimes it's true, but I think that that trust is sacred. And I think that open pedagogy is a way we fulfill our sacred trust to communicate what we know to the people who pay for it and make it possible. And I think that we establish and reinforce trust every time we do that well, and we fail our communities every time we fail to do that work.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm a loudmouth on the internet for a lot of reasons. I clearly like to hear myself talk. I clearly think I have something to say. But I also feel a responsibility to share what I know and the work that I do in ways that are of service to others. And ultimately I think that the open education movement is about being of service to others, being of service to our colleagues, being of service to folks who want to do intellectual work outside of intellectual structures that are preconceived and predefined. We owe it to our students to be part of a lively open discourse. Then we owe it to our communities because, and I know I keep coming back to it, but they pay the bills. If they can't make any meaning out of the work that we do, why would we ask them to continue funding it. Like on a certain level, it's getting to a bit of elitist. It's like, well, I'll tell you what's worth your money.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Anyway, Open Education Week always makes me thoughtful. It always makes me think about why I'm here and why the work I do matters because I hope that it does. All I ever want to do is to be of service to the community. So I hope you'll check out Open Education Week. I hope you'll check out some of the great talks at TRU and beyond. We're not constrained by geography this Open Education Week, thanks to the miracle of video conferencing software. You'll be able to check out all kinds of talks all over the province and beyond. And I hope that you do.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

We've got a pretty great open education resource in process here at TRU that I am really excited to tell you about because it's a project that takes a lot of my extremely messy, chaotic and disorganized labour, and turns it into something beautiful. Who wouldn't want to celebrate that. Marie Bartlett, Stephanie Gountas, and Nicole Singular are here to talk about the new resource Teaching Unbound, both a WordPress resource and a Moodle campus that take all of the mess of the Support for Virtual Delivery Moodle shell, which if you've ever tried to locate anything in, you will agree with me was in desperate need of an update and they make it beautiful. I can't wait for them to tell you all about it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So I am here today with Marie Bartlett, Stephanie Gountas and Nicole Singular, all from Open Learning, who are working on this incredible resource, particularly for campus community, but for

everyone really called Teaching Unbound, which is going to be a well, it already exists, is in the final stages of polish right now is an open resource for teaching and learning online. Before we jump into talking about the resource itself, I'm going to ask each of you to introduce yourselves. And usually on the show, I've been asking people to tell me a little bit about themselves, like your title, where you work and maybe where people might have seen you around campus back when we had like corporeal form. So Marie, do you want to start introduce yourself?

Marie Bartlett:

Hello. My name is Marie Bartlett. I am an instructional designer in Open Learning and you probably may have seen me or my work around campus because I really like to draw large scale graphic recording and graphic pieces. And I have been drawing some of those for the strategic planning for TRU before we all went home.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, they are beautiful. Your visual note-taking, visual facilitating work is some of my favourite stuff that you do.

Marie Bartlett:

Well, I thank you for that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Steph, would you introduce yourself.

Stephanie Gountas:

For sure. So I'm Stephanie Gountas. I am a curriculum multimedia developer for Open Learning. I don't really know where people would see me on campus. I tend to stick to the Open Learning building. So if you're around there, you might see me.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I don't blame you. It's a good building. I was just thinking about Wellness Wednesday yesterday, because it was Wednesday and how my favourite Wellness Wednesdays are the days in Open Learning when people bring donuts. I know the healthy treats are good too, but I especially like Wellness Wednesday donuts. And I was thinking like, I miss the building. I miss the donuts. Nicole, would you introduce yourself?

Nicole Singular:

Hey, so my name's Nicole Singular and I'm a graphic designer for Open Learning and I kind of hide out in my little graphic designer cave. You might've seen some of my visuals floating around campus. They're kind of, there's sometimes a bit obnoxious, but yeah, that's about it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like them. I'm thinking in particular of your data, privacy imagery from last year's Data Privacy Day, those were fantastic and loud in the best possible way. They needed to be loud for that event. Thank you. So thank you all for joining me. I'm hoping you could tell folks a little bit today about what the Teaching Unbound resource is and what they can get from it. But I'm also really interested in the process

because this to me is like a perfect OER story, right? You've taken a bunch of disparate, messy resources. I say that as the person who made most of the component parts that you're drawing from. We've got all these disparate, messy resources and you've turned it into like a beautiful, usable functional tool. So maybe I'll start by asking Marie about, you know, your take on the project and what you hope Teaching Unbound offers. And then I'd love to hear from Steph and Nicole about the process of drawing and putting it together.

Marie Bartlett:

So Brenna, this is such an exciting opportunity. And I was so happy when you approached me and asked about helping with this resource. What happened when the pandemic started last year is that we all reacted. There was this, there was this drive and a real collaborative effort to learn together, to adapt together, to make sure that we serve our students the best that we can under the terrible circumstance that the world found itself in. And, and it resulted, I think Brenna you're right. It was a mess. It was really, it was a creative chaos and creative chaos is where I love to start because creative chaos points to innovation. It points to a true effort to convey a lot of you know, information to facilitate a lot of learning in a short amount of time.

Marie Bartlett:

You don't have time to plan, to structure, to -- it just needs to happen and it needs to happen yesterday in that case. So it was happening yesterday, stuff was happening. We all, we all tried, you know, to organize as many things that we felt were needed at the time during that summer, spring and summer sharing knowledge all together as large groups and it had a real dynamic feeling to it. And from those initiatives came recordings and resources and it's, it was all kinds of stuff. It was, yes. So there was a heap of stuff in a Moodle shell, and it was all very good and it was all very effective for the situation. You know, and well, well meant for the situation that was happening. And so we thought I think it was about late summer. That's really difficult to navigate at this point, it's becoming too difficult to navigate, to be effective.

Marie Bartlett:

So we needed to do something. And as an instructional designer, that is probably one of the most exciting parts. I, I know some of my colleagues, we all like different stages. I'm maybe I shouldn't be speaking for other colleagues, but I find that the beginning stage it's most exciting for me. I like to look at what's there. I like to see what can be done. I like to talk to everybody what their ideas may be. And in this case we came up with Teaching Unbound, WordPress campus, and we are planning to move all of the Moodle happenings -- and Teaching Unbound Moodle campus.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. And I am particularly grateful because you're right. We were reacting. We built a whole bunch of resources. You know, many of them built very late at night, the wee small hours, especially in March and April, just trying to get people the resources they need and cram it somewhere. And then at the beginning of the summer, we sort of realized that original COVID-19 Moodle shell, that some folks listening will remember, we realized that wasn't working anymore. It had gotten too leggy. And so I sort of tried to break everything off into tabs to at least gesture towards the concept of organization. But then it just kept growing and building and there just kept needing to be more tabs and more content.

Marie Bartlett:

Yeah. And users, yeah. Users don't experience that. Well, when they can't find their way around, it's like being in a building with horrible signage and you're like, Oh my gosh, I just need to get to this one room. So what we decided collectively is that we will have a Moodle campus that will be very functional. So the up-to-date workshops, office hours forums, most up-to-date information will be laid out there in a nice fashion. And then the word -- there is going to be a holding area as to say archiving that will have content that is ready to be moved into the main space, which would be Teaching Unbound on WordPress. And that is beautifully categorized.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So I'm gonna turn to Nicole because I, at least part of the genesis of this project came from me seeing the Learning Without Walls site. Right. Which, which Marie, Nicole worked on as well in terms of the visual look feel. And I think the first thing I said to Brian was, well, can our Moodle shell look like that? I think he was like, I'm not sure that you can do it. And -- True! Nicole, Moodle is such a rigid structure and we always have these questions about how to make it like a more usable sort of navigable space. I'm wondering about how you do that visually when you're working within a Moodle shell, whether it's the learning without walls site or this redevelopment of the Teaching Unbound resources.

Nicole Singular:

Well, it's definitely a design challenge to work within those confines, but it's, it's also kind of rewarding. Like I, I find even just a few simple changes can really help break that Moodle mold and kind of visually differentiated a bit. Like there's limited things you can do, but there's also a lot because if you're comfortable with HTML or CSS, like you're, you're limited to the little boxes, but you can do anything within those little boxes.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's the true creativity, right, is working within constraints.

Marie Bartlett:

For sure.

Nicole Singular:

For sure. And it's also, it can be difficult because you don't want to go over the top because it is within those little confined spaces. So I find using white space a lot really helps. So it's not gonna look as compartmentalized, but yeah, I, I find it fun to kind of break that mold a little, like some sort of banner can help. Sometimes I enjoy the tab format because you can bring in some colours that way,

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This one's for all three of you, I guess, and anyone can jump in who wants to: Steph, Marie, Nicole: what can people expect? So I guess we should tell folks that the Moodle shell is going to look a lot different really soon. So the repository that is basically completely unnavigable that you've come to know and love is going away. And it's going to be replaced by a much more streamlined space. So if we're thinking about folks logging back into Moodle for the first time after the changes, what can they expect to find in this new space?

Marie Bartlett:

So I can get that, Brenna. So that Moodle space, the Moodle space, it will be very functional and very easy to navigate. I would say, I wouldn't want to use the word bare, but let's say simply simple, simply simple so that people can find their way, so that the workshops themselves are highlighted and given the spotlight that they deserve, rather than people having trouble finding them.

Marie Bartlett:

And then the WordPress -- that space will then feed the WordPress repository and the repository -- we have really given a lot of thought about the fact that there's going to be a ton of content in there and a ton of diverse content. So we were thinking about all kinds of different structures and categorization and how is the user going to ever find anything? Because we were thinking about Moodle. So how do we harness WordPress so that people can find -- and that's when you're really, really focused on the search tool. So we wanted we wanted a site that would be searchable by keyword, effectively, as in, if you type in a keyword, you actually get something that has that keyword in it. Because as silly as that sounds, it's not always like that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, I was just ordering groceries on the Save-On website and they could learn something from us how to categorize items. I am not sure why Swiss cheese brings up several kinds of chocolate, but not in fact Swiss cheese.

Marie Bartlett:

Exactly. And yeah. So Steph, you were so instrumental in picking that plugin. I want to speak about that plugin.

Stephanie Gountas:

Oh, the BetterDocs that, yeah. Nicole and I went through quite a few before we actually landed on that one. We actually asked for a bit of advice from the production supervisor, Thomas Sandhoff, because he's really good with WordPress as well. Right. So we had asked him for any advice and he had shown us about three or four different libraries, but we ultimately went with BetterDocs. I think it just had the better look if I'm correct Nicole, I think it was the easier one to use as well.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So what does something like BetterDocs do if I'm an end user on a website, like why do I want a resource like that available to me rather than say the basic search built in to WordPress that already exists?

Stephanie Gountas:

BetterDocs is a knowledge base. So it, it structures everything in the right hierarchy, from the get-go. As soon as you make a page, it's going into the tabs on the side and the it's linking to everything where it needs to right off the bat. Whereas if you try to do this just by yourself, you're going to have to build all these other little components. The search will probably still work, but it will like, it's not as streamlined, I guess.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Right. That makes a lot of sense because really what the problem with the Moodle resource that exists now, the pre-Teaching Unbound resource is that Jamie and I know that there's a lot of stuff there and we can go and find the links and send them to people when they send help desk tickets in. But it's not exactly a self-help resource right now, which is what it was always supposed to be. But it, it just grew too big, too fast to be usable in that way. So I guess if we think about the new Teaching Unbound resource, it's almost like we're planning for it to be a resource first and foremost, as opposed to, I don't even know what we were thinking when we built the Moodle shell -- a place to cram stuff, because we needed a place to link to, right?

Marie Bartlett:

That you just came up with a good differentiation Brenna. So the Moodle space it's going to be, become where the action happens. It's a safe space. People have access, it's great for conversations and Big Blue Button interactions, whatever discussion forums would be appropriate for whatever's coming at us tomorrow, a week from now. Because this is you know, still responding to the situation that we are in. And we were looking ahead as well. So from that active space where things happen, there's this passive repository that ideally is helpful and searchable.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's, it's really kind of amazing when I look at something like the Learning Without Walls resource that you guys worked on over the summer to build up. And now the work that you've done already on Teaching Unbound, and I'm thinking too about the PressBook that Melissa and Michelle -- they've been on the show before to talk about that resource. You know, this past year has really chaotic to me most of the time. But when you take a step back, we've actually produced quite a large body of open resources for folks to draw on both within the TRU community and outside, which is, it's kind of cool, really, when you think about it. And my gratitude for this project is you guys have created something out of a lot of, as I say, really chaotic work that I did and it makes it look like really good. It makes it look like this comprehensive coherent resource which I'm really grateful for, because I think you need people when you're working on this kind of timeline. Someone's gotta be able to step back from the chaos to see the bigger picture, right? And so to me, I see the strengths of the three of you, Marie, your instructional design perspective, Steph, your ability to categorize and see how the functionality works, Nicole, your visual eye, those factors come together to create something that is actually -- actually useful and useful now and into the future. And I think that's really exciting.

Marie Bartlett:

Talking about large amount of material and content and amazing things that were created over the past year. I was just talking to Nicole this morning about how she chose this. And she said, I like this minimalist look. And you know, it has a beautiful design when you go see the space, the graphics are amazing. But what I thought this morning is this is brilliant Nicole, because this, all of this stuff and the categories that can be overwhelming and that minimalist approach to design cools it off, and it brings the space into almost a zen-like quality. So we hope that when you visit it will not be overwhelming because Nicole has made this gorgeous space that is very welcoming and very Zen.

Nicole Singular:

I find minimalism kind of nice too, because it gives you a lot of room to build. Like, if you want to go into another direction, it doesn't like confine you into like a certain space. Like you're, you're able to grow and change and move forward. In that sense.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You know, I often had faculty comment that office hours, well not, not when office hours are chaotic because they often are, but on the days when you catch office hours and they're calm, it can be a really calming experience to just sit and talk with one person about what's going on in your course, and to get the problem resolved. And, you know, lots of faculty told us over and over again, that that was something that really helped with their anxiety, particularly through the initial pivot. And we were never able to capture that spirit or that ethos in the, of the Moodle site in either iteration, right. It was just, there was just a, too much there. We hadn't even thought about the idea of moving it to another space and it was just too busy. And so I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful now to have this space where the workshops and office hours, which are really chill experiences, like we try really hard to make the workshops low key and relaxed and inviting and warm. I'm really grateful to now have a Moodle space that captures that, so that when you land in the shell, you're already kind of ready. I hope for that sort of safe, welcoming, warm, learning experience that we're going for in office hours and workshops, every time we get together with faculty. Is there anything else that you would like folks listening to know either about the resources that are available or how you hope the resource will be used? Is there anything we haven't touched on yet that you want to talk about before we leave our chat today?

Marie Bartlett:

I don't think so. Brenna, I hope that the resources are useful. We are going to be very open to feedback. If you have any ideas about any of the spaces, please let us know. And before we started this recording, the only thing that I wanted to stress and Brenna did, and I'll say it again, is that the naming of the Moodle space is going to change. So we were thinking about having a little sign at the old one.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. Yeah. We haven't dropped that on you Nicole yet, but like what if we decide that the old Moodle shell that was like room change notice, you know, like you'd have if you showed up to the wrong class.

Marie Bartlett:

Because we had a couple of room change notices and we don't want people to be wandering in the hallways. So hopefully one of the last room change notices for this one.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. I can't imagine a situation where I'm going to want to change this. It's so funny. It's -- I've not been happy with what we've been building, but I didn't really know what else to do. So the support that you guys have offered us by turning your remarkable talents to this project, I'm just so grateful. And so, you know, anybody can go and check out the new Moodle shell which you'll already be auto subscribed to. So one day you'll just see it and you'll know -- it'll be called Teaching Unbound Moodle Campus, but also, and of course, folks can visit the WordPress site, teaching.trubox.ca, where they'll be able to find the complete archive of all of the workshops in a way that you might actually be able to make use of. I am so impressed when I go in and see that people are still like finding and watching the workshop recordings, because it's just a Yeoman's feat right now to find what you're looking for in that Moodle shell.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I, I'm really excited to see how much more traction use these learning objects get once people have access to the new site. So thank you so much to all three of you for joining me to chat and to talk about

your skills and talents. If you're listening to this podcast on Sunday or Monday, we do have a walkthrough of the site live today from 12 until one on Monday. So please do -- there's a link to register in the show notes. You can come and ask questions of the team and find out more about the project and even just see it for yourself live and in person. Thanks so much everyone for your time today.

Marie Bartlett:

Thank you.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for episode 22 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. And of course you can always comment on individual episodes there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'll leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip. And it's Open Ed Week. I encourage you this week in particular, to find some open resources in your discipline and share them with your students. Maybe you're already doing this in the form of OER, or maybe you're using a really great video that's openly produced. Maybe you send students to a resource you've found through BCcampus. That's awesome. If you're not already doing that work, is there something you could introduce students to this week that would give them a sense of how your community discusses your topic in the open? It can be really valuable for students to see that the discourse within the university is not always so different from the discourse outside it, or that the way we talk about the discipline at one institution is pretty similar to the way we talk about it at another. This work is part of what open does really well. It helps students to establish a sense of the norms and expectations within their discipline. So give it a try this week, if you haven't yet, or find an additional resource, if you have, in the meantime, I'll be at Open Ed Week this week. I hope I see you there. Take care. Bye. Bye.