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. And first off the top, I have a cold. So I'm sorry for some of the heavy breathing that is to follow. I edited it out as best I could. And second I'm thinking today about time and temporality and everything. "There Is a season turn, turn." I won't sing, but let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It is Congress season for me. I don't know how many of you are social sciences and humanities people who spend time at the Congress for the Social Sciences and Humanities every year, once upon a time called the Learneds until they were like, wow, that's super pretentious, but let's call it something else. I love Congress. And I also often am in a argument of some description around some component of Congress, whether it's some issue to do with accessibility or arranging for childcare or whatever. It's an institution that I actually really want to make better. And that I've been committed to for most of my career. I think I went to my first Congress in 2009, I guess, at UBC. And I've been to all of them ever since with maybe some minor exceptions, I've even been a Congress mom. Many, many times. I took my son with me to Ryerson when he was only, oh gosh, maybe seven months old and to Regina as well. One of my favorite Congress experiences. In fact, I was pregnant at Calgary and I was the only person who knew. And I got to tell you, a Congress without caffeine or booze is less enjoyable by half.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love Congress. I'm also really struggling with it this year. I have to say. So by the time you hear this, I will have given at least two, maybe four of my six papers at Congress. Yes, that is excessive. Thank you for asking. I always overdo it at Congress. For a long time, it was the only conference I could afford to go to. So I used to try to pack it full, like as full as I possibly could to really make that plane ticket count. That was my habit when I was a graduate student. And also when I was a more established scholar, it just made sense with limited PD funds working at the college where I worked. Now, for me, it's less about the funds, particularly as it's virtual, and more because I pitched a lot of these papers like in December of 2019 and was generously given the option to extend them to this year, given the fact that Congress was canceled last year. But my struggle now is that I'm not sure I still care about these things. That's what I mean about thinking about time and temporality. Normally the space between pitching a paper and actually giving the paper is maybe six months at the outside. You have a chance to really develop your thinking, but now it's 18 months and we've had a crisis in between. We're digging our way out of a pandemic. And the kinds of papers that I submitted before the pandemic are not really the kinds of things I'm interested in talking about anymore. My commitment to ethics and educational technologies and reducing harm and underscoring care work and recognizing invisible labour. Those things feel so urgent to me that anything that doesn't fall under that rubric feels like it's hard to take seriously. And that's something I'm struggling with because it sort of feels like the pandemic has taken a part of who I was and am as a scholar away from me.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I know that it probably hasn't in, in very real and concrete terms, we change our focus all the time and it's natural for something as significant as the pandemic to really reshape our focus and our scholarly

interests. I get that, but it is weird to be up against the temporal wall that is Congress so much to do so little time in which to achieve it and to really be struggling with a sense of why I pitched some of these papers in the first place. Now you might be saying, Brenna, why didn't you revisit this when you were first asked to extend the paper another year? And I would say to you, great question, I have no answer for you. In most cases, I haven't reopened these CFPs in months, 18 months, and I'm revisiting them now and really thinking about the scholar I want to be in the post pandemic world. I don't have good answers to that either, but if you're struggling with that too, or wondering if the things you cared about before the pandemic are going to matter to you again, just know that I'm having the same questions in the same conversations.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

On the show today, changing gears, I'm really excited to have Jason Toal come and chat. Jason is our newest coordinator of educational technologies. Actually, that's not quite true. I'm pretty sure Jamie is newer than him by a couple of weeks, but Jason's the newest one on the team. And you haven't had a chance to meet him yet on the podcast. Not really. So I thought I'd invite him for a chat that ends up being a lot about teaching and learning and a little bit about Animal Crossing, or maybe the reverse. Let's let Jason take it from here. So today I am here with newest member of the team, Jason Toal. Jason, would you introduce yourself to our lovely listeners?

Jason Toal:

Hey folks. Yes, this is Jason Toal. Here I am the newest minted member of the learning innovation and technology team, otherwise known as an ed tech coordinator.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. So you have joined us from whence -- where'd you come from before here?

Jason Toal:

I was at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

What -- So let me think of how to phrase this. Where might people have known you if they've maybe never interacted with you at, at SFU, but they feel like they know your name. Why, why might that be the case I'm leading you to talk about ETUG and your various other contributions to provincial projects.

Jason Toal:

Thank you so much. Yeah, I would definitely say that if you are in a post-secondary in the province of British Columbia and have been in any kind of professional development through the ed tech users group, as you mentioned, acronym ETUG plus maybe BCcampus events over the years, particularly specializing in visual practice situations.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Cool. What brought you to TRU -- why jump into a role like this right now? What is wrong with you is I guess --

Jason Toal:

Oh, that is such a good question. Yes. Well, I mean, the pandemic definitely is what landed me here at Thompson Rivers right now. My wife and I had managed to get out of the city during our first phase of remote working and seems as we were already out, well, then we gave up our apartment in Vancouver, we left and it seems as I was looking for a new place to live anyways, contemplating returning back to Vancouver this opportunity presented itself and I jumped.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, we're super glad you're here, particularly because I think your interest in sort of the visual is, is something that we didn't have on the LTI team. Anyway, previously we definitely often draw on the strengths of Nicole Singular as our graphic designer and Marie Bartlett over in ID, for sure. But having someone on the team with a visual eye is going to only help. I was wondering if you wanted to talk just real briefly about the workshops you've done so far or that are in process right now since arriving to kind of give people a sense of what your interests are in this area.

Jason Toal:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, as you know, we are in the middle of our summer workshop series: Workshops Without Walls. And I hope it's not the last of our remote offerings, you know, as we go as we go forward with this stuff. But I literally, I think it was my first week here I was asked, what do you want to do in the workshops series?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, I think that was me. Sorry.

Jason Toal:

Anyways. So I sorta jumped in with both feet picking up, picking up on sort of some of the visual practice stuff that I had been doing for quite some time at SFU, partnering with our own Marie Bartlett on, on one series of workshops. And then I think I'm working with with everyone else, like Jon Fulton, the video video stuff, our director, Brian Lamb, we're doing work WordPress websites. I've been attending your --

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Pandemic pedagogies, pandemic --

Jason Toal:

Pedagogies, you caught me with the removal of the "post."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Name change. Yes.

Jason Toal:

Which the alliteration rolls off the tongue a little bit better about, I agree, but anyways, yeah, I've jumped in at the Moodle, restarting your Moodle stuff, which is of course, one of our prime platforms to support, a tech to support and, and it's been a whirlwind. I do have to say. Yeah, well.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That is a nice segue into my next question, which is, how's it going? How are you doing?

Jason Toal:

It is going good. You know, I was actually trying to think of a metaphor for that, for this question, just because it's week seven for me and I am on a limited term. So I'm actually trying to look at them as a, you know, let's say monthly or weekly chunks. Right. And the metaphor that I came up with was water skiing.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I know nothing about water skiing, so you're going to have to really walk me through this one.

Jason Toal:

I am not, I mean, I'm not an avid water skier. I did it a few times in my childhood, but it's scary, honestly. And what the comparison comes from the sudden acceleration, and the need to hold on with all your strength. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, you joined sort of, I mean, frankly, a tiny and wildly overworked team. And you also landed sort of just at the end of winter term, as we were kicking off summer programming. And it was kind of like, well, if you're going to want to do something, you're going to need to know what it is now and run with it because we, as you've probably noticed, we are a small and mighty crew. And I think we punch above our weight for programming offerings generally, but it does mean that there's, there's not a lot of onboarding time. It's really all hands on deck kind of place.

Jason Toal:

I mean, it really worked well for me just because I had been looking for some new projects and challenges to sink my teeth into. So, so yeah, that was nice.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. So I guess I kind of wanted to use this as an opportunity to sort of introduce you maybe more fully, obviously your workshops are going to introduce you to the community, but for folks who are listening, I wonder if you want to talk a little bit about like why educational technologies, why this weird, largely dystopian field, what interests you about it and kind of what, what gets you going when it comes to this stuff? I mean, obviously not discounting the visual communication stuff you've been talking about. But obviously you've jumped into a role with a lot of, you know, hands-on technical components and often kind of fiddly detail oriented work in addition to the freedom to do things like your Visualize This workshop series. So yeah. Why ed tech, Jason? Why?

Jason Toal:

Well, I mean, I guess it has always been ed tech for me. I really got into, I mean, I graduated in my undergrad and was fortunate enough to get a job teaching at a college. This is out east in New Brunswick and yeah --

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I didn't know you also had a New Brunswick connection. Does everybody on the team have a New Brunswick connection?

Jason Toal:

NBCC Miramichi -- shout outs to all my east coast peeps out there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You know I'm a UNB grad, right?

Jason Toal:

I did not. Wow. I actually don't. I think I did. I think that does ring a bell now. Yes, well that's yeah, that's a trifecta on our team.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It is. Yeah, that's hilarious.

Jason Toal:

But anyways, so I'm teaching teaching like ed tech actually was one of my first courses where we were literally building, I mean, the course was about HTML and how to present content in a digital. I mean, I've dated myself horrible horribly here, but and the advent of online learning, you know, my first role was as a subject matter expert for the course developers. So I've kind of been in the scene. I mean, you know, it's going on a few decades, that's -- All that to say. And fortunately, my career and experience and, you know, my employment has persisted right through to this time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's no small feat in education generally.

Jason Toal:

It's not pretty well, that's true.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So you go back a ways, you know, when you think about like actually building educational websites by hand with HTML, that's, that's a ways back now. What do you, what are your sort of, I don't know, maybe persistent interests are the things that you see as being maybe consistent throughout that period of ed tech, even as the various platforms and tools may change. Like, is there some sort of overriding ethos that really grabs you or some sort of aspect of practice that you come back to time and time again?

Jason Toal:

Yeah, so definitely my focus on well, what we used to call participatory design has grown. I mean, my graduate degree is in interaction design, which, you know, has sort of merged evolved over the years and merged with user experience and interface design. The centre of my practice really always comes back to the human at the other end of the screen or the speaker or whatever mediated communication, you know, we're being, we're using at the time, whether it's for education or otherwise. And it's one thing I have to say, I appreciate about this team, honestly, because it's something that I have picked up on across the board. Definitely in, in our team learning innovation and technology, but in the open education at Thompson Rivers community as well, the focus on people has been, has been impressive.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's been a really nice aspect actually of this whole difficult and complicated time is, you know, we might get occasional pushback on advice when it comes to synchronous versus asynchronous or when it comes to, you know, workload issues and, and suggestions we're making -- like, totally fair criticisms and questions about some of the things we advise -- the one place I never get pushback is when I talk about care. And when I talk about sort of recognizing like our shared humanity I think sometimes people, I hope -- God, I hope people are learning something new in ways to approach it -- but I never have anybody sort of like really lobby for more conversations about content and less about, you know, student learning and how that works. And that's not been the case for lots of my colleagues who have found those conversations a lot more difficult. So it is something I really hold on to about the community here. I think people do genuinely really care about that student experience and want to do right by their students in really difficult situations.

Jason Toal:

It's, I mean the past year has opened up all kinds of conversations in, in this area and at the, you know, at the same, the same time our field educational technology has really flourished a lot, but then sort of at the same points --

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I was gonna say, especially the evil bits, Jason. The evil bits are doing really well.

Jason Toal:

The critical lens on the technologies and what they're doing to our brains, let alone just our learning experience is conversations that I think folks have been having in small conferences, like the, ETUG tech users group over the years. But, but now I do think they're happening at higher levels and across, I think even IT are involved in some of these conversations from time to time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I think one of the sort of complicating factors of, of forcing everyone into the online spaces is that there's lots of people with varying levels of comfort and engagement, and they're asking new kinds of questions I think and holding folks to account in new and different ways. And I think that's been really positive and exciting. I, I get frustrated with things like, you know, the relaxation of FIPPA through the pandemic. My, my frustration with like, well, but we need that safety net now more than ever, right?

Jason Toal:

Wasn't this just extended as well.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm frustrated by it because it's like do we only have values until they are challenged. And then, then we just fold like a deck of cards, like, is that the plan?

Jason Toal:

Out the window.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So it's, I'm glad we're having the conversations, but I don't, I worry about, I worry about the, what comes next piece, right? Like it's so rare that you get privacy rights back. It's so rare that you haul your data back from a corporation, you know, and I think this next year is going to be really important when it comes to holding the institution to account our institution, the provincial government, like all these different structures. I think we really have to be, not take our foot off the gas on these conversations.

Jason Toal:

Agreed.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So I'm super excited that you've joined the team. I wonder if I might pick your brain about that visual and user experience stuff, as I said, I think that's that to me is what you bring to the team that's maybe most exciting or, or, or most filling an obvious gap in my own competencies and sort of the skillset of the team as a whole. You've had the opportunity now to see like a bunch of Moodle shells. You've seen a bunch of the core spaces that we offer students. If you could change, let's say you could give everyone, like, I dunno, maybe a top five of things they could do with their Moodle shell to improve the student experience. I don't know if that's an insanely hard question to ask off the fly, but I, but I'm curious what you would do with it. If, if you ha if you could give that advice to faculty.

Jason Toal:

Yes. I can go there a little bit with your Brenna. Thank you. I mean, honestly, I'm very critical and I am very, I would even say judgy when it comes to what is presented to me as an interface for finding information. Like when's my next assignment due, when is my so and I've seen enough now Moodle shells to get a sense of the playing field, so to speak. I can surmise that there, well, first of all, I will just slightly throw Moodle under the bus here a little bit, because there are limitations and I am not picking on Moodle over any other learning management system. It's really what you get. You know, you get a standard set of you know interface components to work with, and it is ultimately flexible, but it all kind of looks the same. And that is both a blessing and a curse. So the consistency is really important. And what I have not seen or really sort of, you know, made any concrete observations is how the consistency is kept across a program for instance. So it's clear within one instructor's course, they come up with a, maybe a look where they choose that choose a format and they're able to stick with it. But that would be doubly important. I think if you're in a specific program and you're flipping from course to course to course, so I'm not sure if that level of coordination is happening. You might know a bit more about that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No. I mean, that's not entirely true. There are some areas I'm thinking of the the healthcare programs up at Williams Lake. They're very careful to, to produce, well, often they teach out of a single shell and they build all their courses into one shell to give students that really consistent experience. But no, I think that across campus we've, I mean, it is entirely left up to the faculty. And in fairness, the flip side is there's been, there's very little guidance or support, and there's very little investment in making sure like coordinators, for example, have the time to oversee some of that stuff. So there's really kind of no one minding the shop on a program or department wide level in most areas of the institution. And I think you're right. Like, I think one of the things we talked about a lot, a lot, a lot in the summer is cognitive load, right? And really, often in the context of please stop using additional random services that we don't support at the institution because students have to learn it and then they don't have anywhere to go for support, right. And the cognitive load of mastering multiple platforms. But there's

also something to be said about the cognitive load of moving across courses that have a really different look feel. And it's, you know, nobody does it maliciously, but there are definitely instructors who will use, for example, a different, a different course, like a different theme for each of their multiple courses. And so even a student moving between two courses with a single instructor may be having a wildly different navigation experience across those two courses. And from the instructors perspective, that's helpful to like draw a line between courses, right. And right now I'm in this course right now in this course, and I can see it visually right away, but I think the knock on effect of students, we haven't had, we haven't done enough to talk about that piece. I mean, I would love to see more coordination, you know, like let's have a session where we go into departments and talk about like choices they might want to make in the way they present material, whether it's in Moodle or WordPress, you know, we've never had a big enough team to do that kind of thing, but I think it would be really exciting to be able to start to do that work.

Jason Toal:

And build the crossovers. I mean Moodle is not an island of its own. And I know that's a different -- instructors are making choices and juggling multiple platforms for for their teaching experiences. So that even expands the number of issues that can go awry there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's true. And you know, this is like, you know, on my, my never-ending quest to get fired, but it's really clear that there's not like a lot of, there's not been a lot of sort of leadership level guidance on things like that. And I think they largely get left as a matter of freedom. Right. It's like, it's your expression of your course materials? Which is true, but also we could just say, you know, well maybe every course should have, like the calendar block turned on. That's a really useful block. What if we all used it? You know, that kind of thing

Jason Toal:

Yeah. Consistency and of a, of a feature set. And so that, that functionality it's I mean, I like to think of it as a goat trail and that, as long as that trail, if I have -- can stay on the same trail for my journey on a daily basis, don't make me get off the trail to some new challenge, unless it's critical. Another, another thing I could say about some of the Moodle shells though, is, and I've seen great examples of this are, is the use of visuals. So there are obviously the, you know, a lot of the content can be read or video as you're going through that Moodle page having, well, I like to think of them as sort of a, an, an icon or a, like a cover of a book and each chapter let's say each week, or each topic, some consideration about that cover, like, how are you representing this whole block of time and learning activity visually, and there's lots of ways you can approach that challenge. If you will, if you're looking for some answers, you could be looking at our Visualize This! workshop series

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Got the plug right in there, like an old pro. I love it. Go on.

Jason Toal:

Well, the first one's, I don't know when we're going, this episode's going up. So it might be past, but it's, this Thursday is our next in the series. We've got a couple more alternating Thursdays. Yes.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This episode will come out just after the next workshop, but we are archiving those. So people can always go back and check out what you, what they missed in Visualize This. If they want to jump in.

Jason Toal:

Now this is, I mean, we're trying to gather everything as well at the discussion, some of the work that participants are making and really asking a lot of these questions about how you know, it's much more than looking for a pretty picture that is going to sell a thing. It's a, it is an opportunity to invite students to engage with the content and the student's perspective of those. I mean, this was a great discussion that came up last week, is this sense of the importance that students see themselves in the content, in the course, but, you know, whether that's the, you know, the Thompson rivers website, the, you know, the pictures of students on campus to the, to the images that are being brought into the lessons themselves.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Hugely important. And interestingly, like connects up with that old school, but I think still really super useful model of online education, right. The community of inquiry model. And you've got that piece of the pie. That's like instructor presence, right. And, and the visual signature of a site is an expression of instructor presence, right. It's like, how do I approach this material? How do I try to infuse my Moodle shell with like my sense of humour, my personality but what you're getting at this issue of representation and feeling like you're a part of the content, I mean, that comes down to the, to the sort of social presence, right. And whether or not a student feels like they can write themselves into that subject matter or that discipline.

Jason Toal:

Absolutely. And it's up to the instructor to sort of have their representation forward. But then, I mean, where it gets really exciting for me personally, is when that when visual assignments and opportunities for the students to both generate and share whether it's just photos that they're collecting on their phone or actual drawing, let's say visual notes there. I say visual note taking you know, there's a range of expression that that can be used for a student engagements on their end.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

One of the most popular little ideas that, that floated around last summer, particularly that first summer, fully online semester, a bunch of instructors were, they set up a discussion forum where students could post what they saw at their window each morning. And so just like popping up a picture of the view from where they're doing their work and the instructor would post, like, this is the view from where I record the lectures and allowing everybody to get a sense of where each other was in space. It was, it was, I know a handful of instructors who did this, and it was a super popular exercise with students. And in fact, when we did our first round of feedback at the end of the summer term, that idea came up again. And again, like this idea of sort of making more personal, the core space by including aspects of their own visual world.

Jason Toal:

I love it. That is beautiful. I mean, and as a sort of an add on idea to that, because we are, we have been in this video conference environment now for quite a long time. I'm so tired. I loved computers. I love playing video games. I like deejaying not anymore. It's like, I just want to turn it on an entertainment device anymore. It's like, it's too much, but but having your camera on and being constantly engaged in

this synchronous environment is it's a burden to say the least. And so I just love this one idea of like of a visual check-in. So instead of having your camera on all the time, but you, you know, the instructor still needs to check in and make sure people are there through a short activity or a quick doodle activity, you know, here's the, here's the challenge. Do a quick sketch, show us what you drew, like, turn your camera on for a moment and just show us your picture. You know, and then that's it, you go back to your lecture or whatever it is, what other teaching things you're doing.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like that because, you know, I do think that in many ways we were much more prepared for a variety of modalities in the fall, but by winter, everybody was just so burned out and exhausted. And it was like, I'm live lecturing on a synchronous video because I can't do anymore of the other stuff. And I totally get that from a workload perspective. A live lecture is a lot, a lot less work than preparing all these other sort of learning objects. We can have a big conversation about which kind of learning is deeper for sure, but from a pure workload perspective, I get it. But I also think it's always really telling to see what faculty do amongst each other. Right? So like Jason and I are recording this podcast in a platform that allows for video. And I turned on the video to show Jason how it works. And then I was like, is it cool with you if I turn this off, because if we're going to have a conversation, I need to be able to focus. And I don't think I do my best focusing when I can see myself performing the art of thinking or listening or presenting or, or asking, you know,

Jason Toal:

Agreed a hundred percent. I mean, when was even the last time you made a phone call to a friend? I don't know if that's a modality that, you know, but it's, it's, we default to a video conference, whether it's on your Facebook live or your different things. And a friend, a colleague described it to me last year, I guess, midway through all the craziness, but like audio, she said was like the caviar of communications.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I, you know, I agree. I mean, obviously I'm fond of podcasts. No surprise, but no, I totally agree. And you know, I'm, I'm a millennial and I definitely am like afraid of my phone's phone function. Like I find incoming calls to be a personal attack, like very much the stereotype of my generation in that way. But it's funny because, you know, audio is very intimate and so much more intimate for me for my experience than, than video can ever be. And I think it is that, that very strange experience of watching yourself do something in a video conference. You know, you know, my friend Hannah McGregor, it's her birthday today.

Jason Toal:
Happy birthday.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And so yesterday we had a birthday party for Hannah in Animal Crossing. This is how cool I am, Jason, get ready. And one of my most favourite things to do is play animal crossing with my friends because it's no stakes, there's nothing bad can happen. It's very gentle. But use the audio, you know, if you have, if you have an iPhone or an Android phone, you can enable a voice chat in the game, through your phone and to just like chat casually with my friends and play a game. And it's so it's so much more strangely, ironically, it's so much more like being in a room with them than when we FaceTime, so much more. And I don't know why, but I really do have that experience. And it's, you know, they're, well, there's all kinds

of theorizing around it, but I think about parasocial relationships and podcasting and the way, if you listen to the same podcast for a really long time, you start to like, sort of in the back of your brain, believe you're friends with all the, all the people in the podcast. Right. and that doesn't happen in nearly the same degree with a TV show that you watch with just as much regularity, right.

Jason Toal:

Listening to episodes of You Got This! was some of my prime work before, before and after I landed here. I mean, I already did feel like I knew people personally, I mean, everybody is very welcoming and kind as well, but you're just cause like you get a chance to listen to their voice. I mean, you make such a nice space for people to share their stories. And well anyways, I have to try this Animal Crossing. I'm not sure. I'm not sure if my, my tween nephews will dig it too much because there doesn't seem to be enough violence in here, but -- which is great

Brenna Clarke Gray:

There's no violence! You move to a remote island and you take out a mortgage that's handled by a raccoon and you slowly pay it off. But if you don't pay it off, no big deal, you just sort of move through the world? You collect fish, you collect bugs. It's -- I mean, I've always played Animal Crossing since its first iteration, but it is the ideal pandemic game because nothing bad happens. Everything is always fine. You can chat. Yeah. Yeah. And, but it's a really closed ecosystem, right. So it's not like -- my husband plays Xbox One and when he plays online, it just sounds like a miserable experience. Like there's, there's, there's, you can hear like 13 year-olds yelling at him for some reason. It's just like, the whole thing seems very unpleasant, but this is the way Nintendo constructs, their online offerings. It's all, well for better or for worse, it's all walled garden stuff. Right. So, you know, everybody you're connecting with in a voice chat like that and it's yeah, for me, it's been a really I don't play it consistently anymore, but the first few months of the pandemic, especially, it was very much like, okay, I'm going to go.

Jason Toal:

Have you had a chance to try out Clubhouse or get into the Clubhouse vibe because I've been hearing lots of buzz.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I have also been hearing lots of buzz and no, I have not. I follow a lot of accessibility rights scholars who have huge problems with with Clubhouse, because like any primarily audio platform, if captioning isn't built in, then it's sort of exclusive by, by design. Right. and so I haven't jumped into it, but you know, I have seen the commentary around it and it's it, it has that same. As I mentioned, that parasocial quality of podcasting definitely seems to be like amped up because now it's combined with a sort of exclusivity factor. Right. So I'm listening in to this conversation of my celebrity faves, but I'm one of only maybe 200 people who are part of this listening experience. Yeah. I don't know. I'm I have not jumped in. Much like the way I consume TikToks, which is I don't see them until they become Reels on Instagram. So I don't find out about Clubhouse until someone who is generation Zed explains it to me on Twitter generally.

Jason Toal:

I mean, I have also not jumped in to that. And in fact had been trying, had been backing away from social media in general, slowly into the mist, you know? But those Instagram Reels are hooky. I have songs in my head that are permanently etched now.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. Jason, we're getting to the end of the time and I promised you, I wouldn't take the whole hour with you. It's definitely nice to chat. I was wondering if there's anything you want to share with the community, any sort of closing thought, free time thing you wish we talked about today that we hadn't, before we go today.

Jason Toal:

I don't want to start a new conversation, but I, I really want to, maybe we could even pick this up in another. We could teaser because I want to know, I want to chat more about comic books with you sometime. And I know that that could be a deep dive and now it's the end, you know, I know that's not good, but I, you know, part of the visual sort of theory that I, you know, have paid, I mean, I'm a big comic book nerd, first of all, from, you know, beginning days.

Brenna Clarke Gray:
Same. Same.

Jason Toal:

But the, you know, the use of text with image is fascinating to me and how it gets applied in an educational context. I mean, I feel people are doing it almost anyways, just making PowerPoint presentations because it's not on a sequenced in panels and some of the other mechanics of comic book amazement. But that is one topic that you know, maybe that's a pub chat, you

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Know, there's huge overlap between the kinds of things that work in comic books and the kinds of things that work in, in up good PowerPoint or in lesson design. And at the same time, the same things that are cognitively difficult about reading a really meaty good comic book are also sort of challenges when it comes to good visual design in classes. Right. So, yeah, I think we should have more conversations like this. This was really good. Yes. Thanks for your time today, Jason. I super appreciate it.

Jason Toal:
Thank you, Brenda.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for episode 30 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. I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip. And I'm going to reflect on what Jason was talking about in terms of the visual signature of your class. What do the visuals that you present to students, whether your Moodle, shell, your syllabus, or anything else, what do they communicate about you? Have you found a way to use the visual world of your course to introduce students to who you are and how you approach the subject matter.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And if you haven't, is that something you're ready to think about? You can always find support from that from our office in particularly from Jason, but it's useful even to just think about how opening your

syllabus with an image or drawing attention to students with colour might help to shape the way students perceive your course from the beginning. There's lots of research out there on the way in which the material that we present to students is perceived. And I think it can be helpful in setting up that trusting relationship, right from the beginning. So you spend some time thinking about that and I will try to finish these Congress papers. Hopefully they're done because as I said, by the time you're listening to this, they should be. And until next time we'll talk soon, take care of yourselves and each other. Bye-Bye.