# Equity & Power

From the earliest days of technology in education, devices and technical advances have been seen as tools for shaping a utopian future wherein everyone can more fully realize the promises of education.

The actual history of the field, however, is replete with examples of how technologies perpetuate inequities (or create new ones) and establish power structures that can allow for oppression, censorship, and the advancement of interests other than those of the learner (e.g., corporations in a market economy).

One illustrative example of this in recent history is the rise of the electronic textbook. Touted as the solution to ballooning textbook cost burdens on students, publishers have provided the same material in electronic formats for learners to rent at nominal price reductions (made possible by much lower material costs on the publisher's part to provide the resources digitally). However, embedded in this shift are technologies that allow for digital rights management of content, which prevents learners from sharing, reselling, or keeping their textbooks (as they previously could), which actually has led to higher textbook costs (e.g., no purchasing of used textbooks or reselling them when done) and reduced access for learners (e.g., access to the book ends once the course ends). In this example, the technology permits for-profit publishers to exert heretofore unseen power over learners through their products, enforcing new restrictions and creating new access barriers.

Other examples of such power shifts and their effects on equity include the LMS-ification of higher education, the commoditization of online learning, the use of inaccessible media for learners with disabilities, the use of algorithms and learning analytics to track students or predict performance, and so forth.

In this section, authors grapple with both implicit and explicit power structures that are introduced or perpetuated by emerging technologies and the effects that such technology-enabled power grabs have on promises of equitable learning experiences for all.
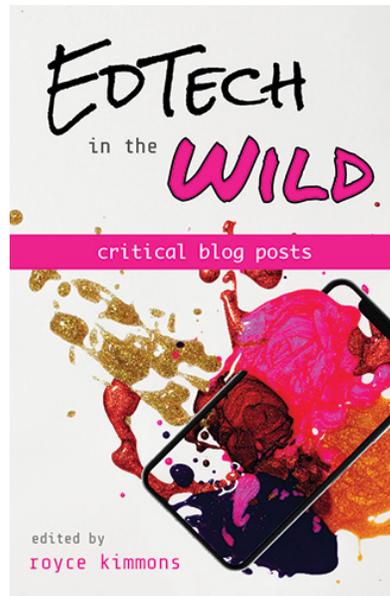
Kimmons, R. (2019). *EdTech in the Wild*. EdTech Books. Retrieved from https://edtechbooks.org/wild