Introduction

Or 'Why Collect EdTech Blog Posts?'

Scholar-Blogger

She feverishly types at her keyboard, the bright screen casting shadows from her fingers in the otherwise dark room. Fighting back grogginess, she shakes her head with a jolt and checks the time.

It's 1am.

"Why am I doing this?" She whispers in a frustrated but controlled voice, careful not to wake her spouse in the next room.

A hundred tasks rush through her head as she remembers her duties as an academic: papers that need grading, proposals that need submitting, data that need analyzing, students that need mentoring ... and now what ... blogs that need blogging?

"*Why* am I doing this?" She asks again with a defeated slump in her shoulders.

She knows that her department chair or her dean will never read the blog. She also knows that even if a thousand people read her post and were inspired to solve important problems, there's no way to make a tenure committee see that the practice has value.

"If it doesn't yield a publication or grant funding, then it's not worth doing," they would say with a patronizing air, and they'd have a point ... at least as far as tenure and promotion are concerned.

Then why do it? Why carve out my precious time to blog when I could be taking this idea and shaping it into an article in a reputable journal?

She smiles wryly as she slowly presses the "Submit" button.

Probably because I actually want people to read it.

The first time someone recognized my name from my academic work was as a graduate student. I was sitting at my computer in an office where I worked my 30-hour-a-week job as a graduate assistant. A student from another department had dropped in and was conversing with my colleague about a technology issue when all of a sudden he blurted across the room:

"Wait, are you Royce Kimmons?"

I replied with a hesitant and quizzical "Yes..."

He explained: "I just watched your YouTube video on TPACK. It was great!"

I'd like to pretend that these situations arise frequently, but they don't, and I'd like to pretend that for every citation that one of my peer-reviewed research articles receives a group of knowledge-hungry educators was edified by its scientific rigor, but I know that doesn't happen either.

In fact, in the same timeframe that it took my most widely-cited article to garner a measley 200 citations, that unscripted YouTube video [https://edtechbooks.org/-BdY], which I made in 5 minutes for no other reason than to test out a new document camera, had received over 80,000 views.

Honestly, I didn't even like that video. It was sloppy, inaccurate, nasal, and meandering. It had low production value, and it didn't get into any of the complexities that we academics relish. It was simplistic, fast, and dirty ... and yet, that's probably why it has had a greater reach than (likely) all of my carefully-crafted research studies, despite the fact that those underwent rigorous peer review and have been published in many top journals.

Rather, that video seems to be valuable and useful to people precisely because it's raw and wild, without access barriers and without the pretense and sophistry that we often use to dress up research articles in the pomp and circumstance that academia has taught us knowledge artifacts deserve.

In short, the value of information resources in a digitally-networked world plays by fundamentally different rules than academics are used to, and our institutions (ahem ... tenure and promotion) and publishing venues are ill-equipped to grapple with these new realities.

I'm not saying anything new here, because just about everyone recognizes that our current and evolving knowledge ecosystem plays by different rules than previous historical paradigms have and that there may be inherent tensions between doing scholarship that is highly-rigorous and nuanced and doing scholarship that appeals to a mass audience. But this leads us to a point of fateful decision:

Do we, on the one hand, ignore these new realities that shape the impact of our scholarly work in the world, or do we alternatively embrace them, enshrine them, and move forward recognizing that the (potentially) simplistic, fast, and unregulated artifacts of a wild web may be some of the most impactful information resources of our age?

The former ignores emerging realities of a digital world, while the latter invites a legitimacy crisis for scholarship.

The fact that you are even reading this now means that you, like me, are probably at least intrigued by the latter option, because otherwise, why would you be reading an openly published book that has not undergone peer review or relied upon the heretofore established orthodoxies of academic

publishing?

Maybe it's because you recognize with me that some of the most important dialogue happening today isn't happening within the confines of academic journals but is unfolding daily on scholars' blogs, on Twitter, and on Facebook, and that much of that dialogue is inherently unpublishable (e.g., too radical) or simply unfolds too quickly to be captured in journals (e.g., by the time any research was published on MySpace, MySpace was already obsolete).

This book represents my own first attempt at dealing with this issue by collecting and enshrining the words of various bloggers in our discipline in a way that represents and signals value toward the diversity of voices in our scholarly community. As such, I have engaged in this work as a miniscule attempt at subverting academic publishing expectations for the purpose of helping the reader to understand some of the real history of the educational technology field as it has unfolded "in the wild" or on the web through artifacts that traditionally would not otherwise be aggregated, published, and cited.

In this volume, I've collected various blog posts from educational technology scholars and leaders. My process went as follows:

1. In January 2019, I solicited blog and post nominations from educational technology folks on Twitter via a community-editable Google Spreadsheet;
2. I utilized the [Moz online service [https://moz.com/]](https://moz.com/) to identify the posts from each blog that were most often linked to from another domain as a proxy for determining what might be the most impactful posts from each blog;
3. I read through all nominated blog posts and the top three to five posts provided by Moz to identify those that most closely fit the goals of this volume;
4. I included up to two posts from each nominated author (for the purpose of ensuring inclusivity of diverse voices over dominance by a few voices);
5. When necessary (i.e., when posts were not shared under an [open license [https://edtechbooks.org/-MQu]](https://edtechbooks.org/-MQu)), I contacted the authors of these posts for permission to include them in the volume as well as to solicit biographical information;
6. And then I coded and organized these posts under an emergent set of categories to provide some semblance of structure and narrative between them without (hopefully) losing the valuable messines and rhizomatic nature of the history of the field.

Not all selected authors responded to my request for permission to include their posts in this volume, and it is certainly the case that there are many, many other important and influential EdTech bloggers out there whose work is worthy of inclusion in this volume but was not included. Though this book is a first, finite attempt at gathering some of these artifacts, I hope that others will engage in similar pursuits to collect additional blog posts to address the necessary omissions that my own limited approach necessitated.

I have organized included blog posts under the following four topical sections to aid my readers' navigation and understanding, though the sections are by no means exclusive of one another, and each blog post could meaningfully be included under more than one section:

A. [Innovation & Disruption [https://edtechbooks.org/-wve]](https://edtechbooks.org/-wve)
B. [Openness & Sharing [https://edtechbooks.org/-snf]](https://edtechbooks.org/-snf)
C. [Identity & Participation [https://edtechbooks.org/-gMF]](https://edtechbooks.org/-gMF)

D. Equity & Power [https://edtechbooks.org/-HoN]

A description of the topics is provided on each section's introduction page, and I have also provided a List of Author Blogs and Twitter Accounts [https://edtechbooks.org/-IFW], which lists each author along with their Twitter and blog information; an Index by Author [https://edtechbooks.org/-zhC], which lists all authors and their accompanying blog posts; and an Index by Topic [https://edtechbooks.org/-yTH], which lists common keywords across blog posts along with links to the paragraphs within the posts in which the terms are mentioned. I have also provided some appendices, which include a List of EdTech Blogs [https://edtechbooks.org/-NPD], both included and not included, and Recommendations for Formal Learning [https://edtechbooks.org/-Cwi], which provides some activity ideas for using this book in a classroom setting.

Furthermore, I have tried to maintain similar formatting in each blog post as is present in the original, and links to original blog posts are provided whenever possible. I have similarly tried to keep typographic corrections minimal (e.g., not converting everything to APA formatting) so as to maintain much of the "wild" flavor of the posts themselves.

And finally, a note on my own motivations and vision for doing this.

As a pre-tenure faculty member, I began this work knowing fully that it would not "count" for anything, that there would be no academic gold stars, and that many of my colleagues would not view this process or its product as valuable in the least. And yet, I feel that this project has been worthy of such prioritization and attention precisely because these blog posts represent diamonds in the academic rough: words and ideas that are worthy of our scholarly attention but that are often ignored because of where they come from - the non-peer-reviewed spaces of personal blogs.

If not already, I hope that this value will become evident to you as you make your way through each post and grapple with the ideas, stories, and voices that each one represents. After all, the world is full of stories, and one cannot understand what educational technology has been or what it is now without hearing and understanding those stories.
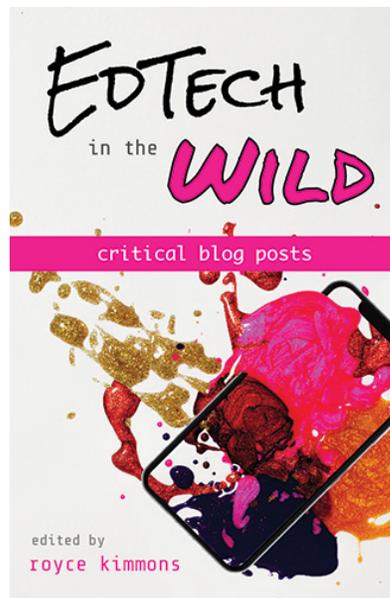
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