Bonni: [00:00:00] Two Georgia Tech academic librarians join us to discuss academic personal knowledge management in today's Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast Episode 9.

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Bonni: [00:00:22] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore tdithe art and science of being more effective at facilitating and learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:47] This is Bonni Stachowiak and today I am joined by not one but two academic faculty engagement librarians from Georgia Tech Crystal Renfroe and Mary Axford. Thank you both for joining us.

Mary: [00:01:00] Thank you.

Bonni: [00:01:02] I wanted to start out by talking a little bit about each of our last week in personal knowledge management because before we dive into looking at academic personal knowledge management I thought it might be fun to share a little bit about what we have come across in the last recent past. So why don't we start with Mary. Tell me something that has popped up for you and your PKM process.

Mary: [00:01:27] Well on our blog I do links round up every once in a while so I can keep track of different productivity tools or techniques or so forth. One that I use fairly often and have done recently is Jamie Todd Rubin's going paper loose columns about every note.

Mary: [00:01:54] He always gives very well organized and does very good listens on different aspects of music every day. Like recently he just had a couple and how he simplified his notebook and tag structure.

Bonni: [00:02:10] Oh wonderful. I cannot wait to go find that and I'm glad to hear you mentioned that the little bit of a tangent here but anyone who is thinking about getting started with Evernote follow this guy's advice and start with a small small number of notebooks and go crazy on the tags.

Bonni: [00:02:25] But that's a tangent so let me pass it over to Crystal. You had a funny one that I got to watch this morning. Tell us about your recent find in your PKM process.

Crystal: [00:02:36] Well my recent one is I was actually listening to some of your previous podcasts and really loved your intro music because I ballroom dance and West Coast swing dance.

Crystal: [00:02:49] And it's very much an East Coast swing kind of number that you start your podcast with.

Crystal: [00:02:54] And now for the same reason I thought of a recent Microsoft video that they put out that it was a parody on the song I'm Sexy and I know it. Which like I said was a West Coast song dance to only they call it I Click It and I know It.

Bonni: [00:03:15] Oh I watched it this morning and was clicking my heels together and is because a person who did quite a bit of swing dancing in my 20s. I love you are into that and I love the music too. I love it.

Bonni: [00:03:27] So speaking of... We've done a couple of shows now and anyone who's listening and this is your first time listening. No need to necessarily go back and listen to those although of course I would welcome you too.

Bonni: [00:03:37] But I would like to learn from each of you when you're just walking down the street and you meet someone who's never heard about personal knowledge management and let's say they're in third grade. How do you explain it to them and let's start with Crystal and then we'll pop over to Mary and get your take.

Crystal: [00:03:57] If I was talking to a third grader I would probably talk to them about, "Okay you're you're going to school and you've got all of your classes

and you know you've got this trapper keeper. It's a great big folder that has folders within it that separate out all of your information and that's how you keep track of your different classes and you might have an agenda. Your classes will all of those pieces and all of those ways to organize information is your way of doing personal knowledge management."

Bonni: [00:04:30] Oh that's wonderful I love it.

Bonni: [00:04:32] I'm glad I asked the 3rd grade question because I actually have recently I'm teaching them just a few classes a year in a doctoral program that just got started so it's brand new. So to say I'm teaching the class for the first time is the first time anyone's teaching that class.

Bonni: [00:04:48] So I don't have to be embarrassed about telling them that. But they they had a hard time really grasping personal knowledge management and one gal. She actually - what clicked for her was that she read somewhere an article to compare it to stuff we do all the time.

Bonni: [00:05:05] You're getting ready to go on a trip. We have to think about what you're going to pack and what you're going to need when you get there. So I thought it was kind of nice when we can take that edge and that fat salt.

Bonni: [00:05:16] I mean in your example of comparing it to their school experiences is a wonderful thing. In my experience working with those students one of the things they tended to do was to focus too much on academics. They were so used to going into the database because they had learned about or relearned.

Bonni: [00:05:34] I should say about the academic databases this particular program has their dissertation research in tandem with their coursework so they were getting starting their early early looks at their research and so their their initial models for personal knowledge management was way too emphasized on the academic.

Bonni: [00:05:54] And I wanted to encourage them as doctoral students you're going to need to have at least something in your life that gets you to step out of that for a minute which is why I'm glad both of you were willing to share something that wasn't necessarily in the academic space.

Bonni: [00:06:08] But for today we are focusing on the academic space. So let's talk a little bit about about well go broadly a little bit and then we will we will

focus a little bit more on academic. So talk to me. Let's start with Mary. How did you first discover the practice of personal knowledge management when did you first - when do you remember hearing about this as a way of thinking about capturing and curating and sharing knowledge?

Mary: [00:06:34] Well I think Crystal and I's experience is similar. We had a third co-author on our blog named Elizabeth Shields and Crystal went to her webinars on her knowledge management. And so she got interested in it from there and then she got me interested in it.

Mary: [00:06:59] I am not a terribly organized person by nature. I used to think of myself as a whirling piece of chaos. So I was going, "Oh something that could help me be more organized."

Bonni: [00:07:17] And so talk to me a little bit about you mentioned being organized Mary. Talk to me a little bit about some of the other ways that personal knowledge management benefits you. And from a personal and also professional standpoint.

Mary: [00:07:31] Personal I love Evernote and the really the reason I really decided it would have a wonderful application was.

Mary: [00:07:47] In the Monday night in the middle of July a few years ago I got a notice on my apartment door that I had to move by the end of August and it so I used Evernote to put down all the information I needed about apartments that I wanted to look at and what the results were and what I needed to contact and what steps I had to do to get moved. And I was in my new apartment two weeks after I got the notice.

Bonni: [00:08:22] Oh that's fabulous Dave and I have a similar story with Evernote and our own personal personal knowledge management system and that is we are looking at different preschools for our toddler and I was we were just adding one the other day and I wanted to capture my notes right away while we were there before I forgot them and Evernote makes some pretty darn good guesses about what you might want to name and note based on where you are and based on what's in your calendar.

Bonni: [00:08:47] So it was great. I don't have to change a thing about the title I could just type it in. It was pretty amazing. So tell me a little bit then about so both each one of you have have a similar title in that you are all about faculty engagement. Correct.

Mary: [00:09:05] Correct and graduate students.

Bonni: [00:09:05] So tell me what that looks like in terms of supporting them in their own personal knowledge management. How does personal knowledge management benefit faculty? How does it benefit graduate students and how do you tell them to approach it.

Mary: [00:09:22] Yeah. When I think of faculty the thing I always keep in mind the most is these people are busy they don't have extra time. So I always think that what I need to offer them is things that are time neutral, or that give them a big advantage so that they're willing to invest some time in it.

Bonni: [00:09:52] Oh that's a wonderful way of approaching it I think because that is true it is one of those things that when I talk about educational technology I try to I try to help people that I work with and support. Know that there are times we just need to put the technology away.

Bonni: [00:10:11] And I think that helps them then feel safe that oh here's a reasonable person that sees that it's not all about technology today but then I do think it's so disappointing when they can't see how much time technology or in this case personal knowledge management really could save them.

Bonni: [00:10:27] And so that's a wonderful way of approaching it with them. I like that idea and so tell me a little bit in Crystal or Mary: either one of you are welcome to take this question. How have databases kept up or not kept up with the times as it relates to personal knowledge management?

Crystal: [00:10:46] There is both the aspect of how databases have kept up and also how people use the databases which don't... those two questions don't necessarily match . The databases have actually they've been trying to do a pretty good job in many cases.

Crystal: [00:11:03] Either the database itself or the are the large publishers like the Springers or the Elseviers. And they they provide benefits such as alerts where people can say their searches and have had those searches automatically rerun and when new things come out the the search will alert the individual that set it up.

Crystal: [00:11:28] The new information or they have RSS feeds to their to their data. There's easy ways to download it into citation databases and then some

of the some of the databases - a Web of Science is one that comes to mind to me - has additional features as far as trying to do citation searching and helping the faculty with some of the statistics that they need in order to work through their tenure process and an annual review process.

Bonni: [00:12:05] And we've talked about a couple of tools. We've talked about Evernote. Does Evernote for either of you tend to be more personal? Or do you do it also for the professional?

Mary: [00:12:19] We use it heavily for our blog. In keeping track of what we're doing and what we planned.

Bonni: [00:12:27] I'm laughing as I look at my phone which has Evernote up as we're talking. Yeah it works great for a blog and it works great for podcasting to me.

Bonni: [00:12:37] I also bring in when I'm working on research on something that's going to involve more academic work I don't use Evernote as much for something like that unless it was just a quick capture.

Bonni: [00:12:50] But I use references manager called Zotero and we've had a little bit of correspondence about Zotero. I know that you have different tools that you might recommend perhaps even more than Zotero but just the idea of having a references manager where do you think the references managers come into play with personal knowledge management.

Mary: [00:13:11] Creating a bibliography at all is just so much incredibly easier these days with the different reference managers. Unfortunately they each have both really good features that the others don't have and not as good features as some of the staff.

Mary: [00:13:29] So it can be hard to recommend. Plus it's librarians. We don't do that kind of intensive academic research that our faculty and grads do so it can be a little hard for us to know which tools. Works best for them. Yeah love to get recommendations.

Bonni: [00:13:49] I'll definitely link to the reference. We've read about some correspondence over on your blog and I'll link to that and to some resources that you have up in your library guides to cause I found them to be quite helpful.

Mary: [00:14:02] Good.

Bonni: [00:14:03] And some of the links actually I'll be putting in the show nuts by the way anyone who is listening and wants to look at the show notes they'll be at teachinginhighered.com/8 as in episode 8.

Bonni: [00:14:14] And so you don't have to feel like you have to take notes furiously as we are going along here and you can have those emailed to you as well and I'll talk about how to do that at the end of the show.

Bonni: [00:14:25] So we have. I want to talk a little bit now about opening it up for a specific way that you have seen maybe faculty not embrace personal knowledge management. What are some challenges that you that you think personal knowledge management could address for them that they sort of miss?

Crystal: [00:14:46] I think for me what I have seen both with faculty and graduate students is just they have a method that they have used in the past whether it was as an undergraduate or a new faculty member and they're comfortable with it. It's something automatic for them.

Crystal: [00:15:05] But it may be something that is very has very much diminishing returns to it as their research gets more and more complex. So actually stopping to learn a new feature and possibly to think about converting what they already have can be daunting to some.

Mary: [00:15:27] I have a faculty member that I've worked with for years who still emails me a lot asking me to complete a reference for him. I keep thinking well I should really teach you about citation management tools but he's not going to take the time to learn them. I just don't think he's one of the people who would so I just do it for him.

Bonni: [00:15:54] And that is actually some of the barriers to getting into using some of the tools I actually had ended up being a funny exchange on Twitter last night and this morning because I had said that an app that I use was intuitive and easy to use.

Bonni: [00:16:10] And let's just say that someone out there didn't agree with my assessment and I was on maternity leave last semester so I hadn't used this app in a while and I opened it up and went, "Oh it's gotten better but I think I had missed that with the better also came more complexity and therefore more barriers for people to embrace it." So it can be tough when just to get into the

world of Zotero takes a number of steps I now started to require it for my undergraduate students not just the graduates.

Bonni: [00:16:41] And I have to break it up into the steps and have a way of holding them accountable along the way or I'll lose them. So it's create an account. Let's get everybody created an account. OK then we have to in my case they work in groups building either business plans or marketing plans.

Bonni: [00:16:57] Now we're going to build the group. Are you all in your group. Okay now where can I add or install it in your browser if you're on a PC or install it on the standalone front of it.

Bonni: [00:17:07] And it's those multiple steps that can be difficult but boy I'll tell you - you mentioned this Mary earlier when someone can see and Dave has a video that he has done on YouTube that just how amazing it can be to create a bibliography.

Bonni: [00:17:23] Whether it's out of Zotero or from your Microsoft Word document. That's the seller right there. That's what gets him going. It's going to be worth it because they can then see how much time it's going to save them.

Bonni: [00:17:35] That's that's what does it so I always start there I always show people here's what this can do for you. So they can see that it's going to be worth those multiple stubs.

Bonni: [00:17:44] So tell us what.

Crystal: [00:17:45] Oh sorry.

Bonni: [00:17:46] No please go. Go ahead.

Crystal: [00:17:47] Something I also tell my graduate students when they come in productivity tools class just one it's very individual what works for one person might not work as well for another. Secondly make sure that you don't let doing the tool will become the goal versus achieving your purpose with that tool.

Bonni: [00:18:11] That is wonderful advice. Absolutely wonderful advice. And you actually just did the perfect segue to what I was about to ask you. Tell us about the course that you have on your site which I linked to and then people can go check out yeah that's actually one of the first for race.

Crystal: [00:18:27] Before we started our blog that went into the productivity realm. After I. Met Elizabeth and learned more about personal knowledge management we created we were creating an entire slate of classes for graduate students.

Crystal: [00:18:47] And I've proposed a productivity tools class and originally I called it. Get that graduate research project done and then after I did it a couple of times I realized really what I was doing was introducing them to a lot of tools and I didn't want to mislead them.

Crystal: [00:19:05] So it renamed it productivity tools for graduate students. It's it's been a very popular course. It's remained in the top three of our research guides. We have statistics on our research guides.

Crystal: [00:19:21] So it is. Even the people that do not necessarily attend the course are accessing the research guide and using the materials within there and it's kind of a class that has just grown over time.

Bonni: [00:19:36] I love that you say that and I and I love the way you have framed it too because that's the reality of it. I did a survey and it's still up on online for people to take. But I wanted to to make sure that these early podcast episodes are going to meet people's needs.

Bonni: [00:19:51] So I asked an open ended question what are you challenged with right now what are you struggling with and well I mean someone said that he took.

Bonni: [00:20:00] And then a couple of answers really come to mind as you talk about that Crystal one person said I have an adult son living with me at home and I'm really challenged by that.

Bonni: [00:20:10] And if there could be an episode about how do you deal with that and we're sort of tongue in cheek another person talked about caring for an ailing parent.

Bonni: [00:20:18] And while we might joke about that a we might say that's the reality of anyone's life. When you're working there. Also we're going to be these added pressure so if we can help them see these tools to be more productive can actually help you have a little bit more peace and then be able to attend to those things that really matter very much so.

Mary: [00:20:41] And if you can get to the students and graduate students or even undergrads then that can set the whole tone for their career.

Bonni: [00:20:53] Yep and what I mean what a gift you're giving them to to make their experience that much less stressful as they go along working on dissertations and such. So anything else I have not asked you about personal knowledge management or some of the other resources.

Bonni: [00:21:07] Before we go into our recommendations segment.

Mary: [00:21:11] Well this is getting into the recommendation segment.

Bonni: [00:21:14] Well then you want to go for it Mary, you're up.

Bonni: [00:21:18] Tell me about the blogs please.

Mary: [00:21:20] There's a blog called ProfHacker that's a Chronicle of Higher Education blog. It started out as being about tools for faculty to use.

Mary: [00:21:33] And it's a little bit broader now but still a lot of tool coverage. And there is a blog called GradHacker started kind of invitation of ProfHacker but for grad students.

Mary: [00:21:47] They both have really excellent pieces that I look to read them because it really helps me know what life is like for grad students and faculty. And there is another blog by Catherine Pope called The Digital Researcher and she's doing some very good work on different tools. And she's got some good post on Zotero.

Bonni: [00:22:09] Oh I went there this morning and absolutely thought that's that's my cue now to go check those out. Absolutely fabulous. I will mention.

Mary: [00:22:16] Of course, your blog is for us now, too.

Bonni: [00:22:18] Oh thank you.

Bonni: [00:22:19] I will mention that there is one that's for undergraduate students two called StudentHacker that lives in that same spirit of the ones that Mary mentioned.

Mary: [00:22:28] Didn't know about it.

Bonni: [00:22:29] Yeah. So Crystal I'm going to share mine and then I'm going to pass it over to you to end us off with your recommendation.

Bonni: [00:22:35] I mine sort of is the the humorous thing that I have found in the last two the last 24 hours. But there was a tweet that someone sent out that was a guy and I won't follow him on Twitter because he's a sports nut. And I just can't do it.

Bonni: [00:22:53] I'm not a sports fan but I was so glad I came across it because he made he said I'll just read that verbatim. This is why I really need adult supervision. I made a random sandwich generator based on my available cold cuts and this guy this guy actually made an excel spreadsheet and I am a little bit of an Excel and software geek so he actually used the random function inside of Excel and has a database here with the meats that he has and how much he has and what sort of condiments he has and the bread.

Bonni: [00:23:24] And make a sandwich based on what's available. And the reason I bring it up first of all it's funny but but second of all I love what this says about how we can help our students not plagiarize as much.

Bonni: [00:23:36] There was a LinkedIn group that I follow called technology using professors.

Bonni: [00:23:41] There was an accounting professor who was talking about having her students do work in Microsoft Excel. How does she keep students from cheating.

Bonni: [00:23:49] And yeah there's lots of ideas. People are talking about using technology for all sorts of things you can imagine to lock down the browser or are all these ways she could test them.

Bonni: [00:23:59] And to me that certainly we need to keep abreast of the technology that we can use to combat tech not to impact academic integrity issues but at the same time.

Bonni: [00:24:10] What about when we get creative and we we tell people hey I want you to use these for functions in Microsoft Excel and I want you to go figure out how to use the random function to do something cool that no one's ever done before.

Bonni: [00:24:26] And I could just imagine if we set our students free to go use some thing what they might come up with something better than I think any of us could come up with on our own.

Bonni: [00:24:34] So I like that tweet. I like what it says and then I like what it also can teach us about using creativity to inspire more academic integrity. So Crystal what is your recommendation.

Crystal: [00:24:47] Well when we organize on our blog we try to come up with ideas of topics to carry through. Last year we did it a year to improve productivity throughout the entire here. So this year Mary and I both chose an area that we were interested in learning more about. For me it was content curation.

Crystal: [00:25:09] So I started exploring the the concept how content curation was not the same as the data curation and the scholarly communications type work that most librarians are are familiar with.

Crystal: [00:25:27] But content curation was very much individuals creating their own content on the web and passing on content that they had gleaned from other sources.

Crystal: [00:25:40] And so my record my. Recommendation was a particular ScoopIt accounts that Robin Good does. He is one of the best content curators that I have found talking about content curation and now he not only has a Web site but also has several different ScoopIt. Folders. That talk about the best ways to do content curation and how to improve.

Bonni: [00:26:13] Have either one of you use that ScoopIt.

Crystal: [00:26:16] Yes I use it.

Bonni: [00:26:18] And is it pretty much you just on there and you click something on your browser bar and tag it if you go you can.

Crystal: [00:26:26] One of the things that I recently did oon kind of the content curation concept and learned that the way I was originally using ScoopIt that is not what content curators are hoping that you do.

Crystal: [00:26:40] I was going through I use it two ways one to use Scroop to look for content myself. I use to search find people to follow. And I would Scoop

different articles from them which was fun but I wasn't making any personal addition to that content.

Crystal: [00:27:01] And the real value of content curation is to take something that can pass along but to pass it along that first digesting it in and analyzing it a little bit more for the next person so that not only do they have the original content to look at but they also have the benefit of your of your knowledge and expertise that you have added As far as what why that was important to you or what you have to add to that particular topic.

Mary: [00:27:32] That's often my definition of personal knowledge management is finding information synthesizing what you find and then adding your own knowledge.

Bonni: [00:27:44] Well you two I must say as we close our time here together Crystal and Mary, both of you have done that for me in spades. And so I just want to thank you for what you do and continue to support your faculty engagement across the country and around the world. You're not just doing it for Georgia Tech and so thank you for what you've done for me and for my students and for our podcast listeners. Now I just really appreciate it so much.

Mary: [00:28:07] Well thank you. Those are wonderful words. We appreciate it.

Bonni: [00:28:10] I look forward to our continued curation for each other and to anyone listening would love it if you have enjoyed this show and you want to help other peoples know about it.

Bonni: [00:28:20] One of the ways that helps do that is to write a review on iTunes or on Stitcher to help other people discover the show and if you are interested in getting these podcast notes and this weeks are going to be particularly good with all these links that Mary and Crystal sent over.

Bonni: [00:28:35] Be sure that you go to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and you'll get the notes every week in your inbox and you'll also get an article about Teaching in Higher Ed. But wait there's more.

Bonni: [00:28:48] You also get the educational technology essentials ebook with 19 tools to help you be more effective and efficient in your teaching. Thanks again for listening and thanks again to Mary and Crystal.

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