

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode number 225 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Kelly Robinette and Matt Rhodes talk about their experiences being a project lead on an open textbook.

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Bonni: [00:00:25] Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:51] On today's episode I am excited because I get to have two people that are very special to me on the episode. They are former students of mine in a doctoral program that I have taught in for a number of years now. And the reason they're so special to me is probably because of their competence in what they do and what they did in that particular instance. And then also just in terms of their character as well and just the kind of people that they are. It's been such a joy getting to know them through that experience and continuing our relationships since then.

Bonni: [00:01:26] The two guests, I'll start out introducing Matt Rhodes. Matt Rhodes is a passionate educator who holds many hats and roles in his day job. He is an educational specialist at a secondary high school in San Diego, California. He teaches students with special needs and is a case manager for 20 plus students. He utilizes technology to enhance his classroom and also in managing his caseload with his students. In his other life, Matt is an educational leadership doctoral candidate at Concordia University Irvine and his research interests and dissertation topic pertain to how educational leaders use evidence based practices and data mining techniques and applications within their decision making processes to help change in improving K -12 schools.

Bonni: [00:02:18] And the second person. I'm so pleased to get to introduce is Kelly Robinette. Kelly is a Southern California native, but she has also lived and taught abroad in England- which by the way Kelly, I did not know until I read your bio. And Kelly has been in education for 23 years- also did not know that- first as a high school English teacher both here and in the UK. Yes she says she taught English to the English. And now as an administrator and she is also currently pursuing her doctorate in education also at Concordia University Irvine, where I met them. And a very important part of her bio, she has two wonderful grown chickens- *laughs* Let me try that again, you know what I was so excited to get to. She has two wonderful grown children, a dog, and four chickens. And so one of the things that Kelly introduced me to when I first met her was the whole idea of backyard chickens and I've been enamored ever since. And people are trying to hold me back going "You don't understand. It takes a lot to take care of backyard chickens." But it just seems like such a cool thing.

Bonni: [00:03:29] So anyway, all this to say welcome to both of you. Thank you for being here today on Teaching in Higher Ed. And is there anything that you have to correct on your bios? Has anything changed since you sent it to me or that you now want to mention about your grown chickens?

Kelly: [00:03:46] No. They're all still alive which is really good through this heat. So we're doing OK.

Bonni: [00:03:52] Matt anything come up since you put your bio in?

Matt: [00:03:56] Basically just my dissertation to move from evidence based practice just to data use from educational leaders, looking at their advocacy and basically how they use data on a daily basis and if they're using proficiently or not.

Bonni: [00:04:11] I am glad to hear that because from the sound of it it sounds like you are getting wise advice to narrow narrow narrow. Is that correct?

Matt: [00:04:19] Yep.

Bonni: [00:04:20] Yeah. Someone is guiding you well. It's one of those things that everyone I've ever talked to about the dissertation process, the more that we can narrow in and the closer we can get to done. It's always a temptation to want to do more and want to have that great big impact. Then it's like just get it done. That's the important thing. So that sounds like good wise advice and I'm happy to hear it.

Bonni: [00:04:42] So let's start out a little bit- I'm going to have Matt start only because Matt for people listening was the first cohort that I ever tried and succeeded at writing an open text. But could you talk a little bit about what we decided to do? What the textbook is about? And a little bit kind of about the finished product?

Matt: [00:05:06] So ultimately my cohort in our doctoral program after our first initial meeting and then reschedule a couple online meetings where we determine what the topic was. And most of us were K-12 educators. We felt that we want to talk about how new teachers could use technology in their classrooms because we feel that many new teachers struggle with using technology in the classroom.

Matt: [00:05:31] And through that development we determined about six different topics that we wanted to include in the textbook. And those included classroom management, Learning Management Systems, assessing learning, collaboration tools, selection of educational tools, and professional development via social media.

Matt: [00:05:55] So all those were the six topics that we ultimately decided to incorporate into the textbook. And I make it sound like it was an easy process but it was like an elimination process over time and a lot of going back and forth about what we actually truly wanted. So I may make it sound easier than it is, but it's actually quite hard to narrow that topic.

Bonni: [00:06:18] So when the finished product came out, people can order a print copy on Amazon and people can buy it on a Kindle type of device and then it's also an open textbook so people can read it online for free. And we also made it that the license is a Creative Commons license.

Bonni: [00:06:37] Both of the textbooks, the same with the when Kelly worked on as well, where people can request to get a version of it that they can then what's called re-mix it. They can add their own stuff make changes and we just say they have to have a page included in whatever new book comes out that references the people that worked on each of your respective textbooks. And so originally that was the plan with Kelly right, that Kelly's his cohort was going to take the one that Matt had worked on and remix it and that's not at all what happened.

Bonni: [00:07:10] Kelly, why don't you talk a little bit about what your book turned out to be? And some of the ways in which your cohort decided to tackle this project?

Kelly: [00:07:19] Well we definitely took a look at Matt's cohort's textbook and we were very inspired by it. We really liked that focus on technology because we do know that educators struggle with it and need some guidance and support. So initially we looked at that but we'd been together for a while. So I think by the time we had this particular class, we'd already had three classes together so we knew each other well. And we studied quite a bit of Michael Fullen and we liked how he talked about leveraging technology to actually help students learn global competencies.

Kelly: [00:07:57] And so we sort of took that inspiration from the previous cohort and then wanted to expand it a bit more to maybe have technology sort of not be the driver but really be the accelerator of student learning of global competencies like character, communication, citizenship. There were six of them in total. And so that's the approach that we took. It was just slightly different but different enough to kind of changed everything.

Bonni: [00:08:25] One of the things that Matt mentioned as he was talking about his project, and I suspect it's going to be a theme throughout at least the first half of our conversation is how hard this is. I mean each of you- and there'll be some things that we will decide not to share that we will keep for our own chats in private.

Bonni: [00:08:43] But these were monumental task and I'll say that in the case of Kelly, I'm really taking inspiration from other people that are much further down the road than I am in terms of open textbooks. And to me, they do iterative approaches. That's what I've heard. So I thought OK well the first time will be really hard, but then the next times will just be iterating and so it was kind of- one of the surprises to me is that some people really had a visceral reaction to that.

Bonni: [00:09:11] And enough people did that I think I have to kind of rethink that as an approach. I'm not exactly sure how I'm going to handle that. But either I need to just be a lot more of a guide in terms of know we really are iterating this, this is how this is going to work. Or being open to the fact that we may just land every single time starting over again. Which I mean I felt good about the output of both of your open text books. I feel good about where we got. But I think I took for granted that it would just be like oh ok, File, Save As. Here we go. And people are like wait a second, wait a second.

Bonni: [00:09:48] And Kelly you described it so well in terms of just recently having been so inspired by Michael Fullen and it had nothing to do with the first one. And to me much more about wow we were just really this is resonating with us. And soon as someone put that idea out there, that was your idea as a possible direction people just really gravitated with it. So that's definitely it.

Bonni: [00:10:08] I wonder if each one of you might share your own perspectives on what were some of the most challenging aspects to doing a project like this? I know there are many. So I'm looking forward to hearing each of your thoughts. Matt why don't we start with you? Then we'll go to Kelly.

Matt: [00:10:23] Well I think there's a laundry list of things that you could say that were the hardest. But I'd say the most difficult thing for us was getting everyone on the same page. And also deadlines. We only had an eight week timeline. It wasn't a traditional semester long. It was eight weeks, two months to get it done. So making sure everyone was on the same page and understanding what the deadlines were and what the responsibilities were and what their jobs were and making sure one contributed was probably I feel like the hardest for our cohort in making those deadlines.

Matt: [00:11:01] Luckily we were able to pull things out at the very end. And so I'd say those two things were very difficult. I think one thing that we did that made it much easier is that we made a chapter that was a model for all the other members of that cohort to follow. I think that doing that in the first few weeks of this project really helped everyone stay on the same page and it allowed everyone to get their chapters done in a somewhat timely manner. I mean we had to scramble at the end but luckily we were able to get done.

Bonni: [00:11:37] On of the leadership qualities I observed, about you Matt, throughout the process is that this is such a silly word but it's very descriptive of you is that you're just totally unflappable. I don't know if anyone's ever said that to you before but you just without any kind of emotion or drama or anything moved us along. And people would miss the deadline and you would move along and you would kind of get back that person and get back on focus and help keep us focused on the end goal. And that was really useful because like you said eight weeks. I mean sometimes I think the interpersonal stuff, like there's important dialogue that can happen and relationships but when you've got eight weeks to discuss also keep moving.

Bonni: [00:12:20] And you were very good about doing that. And I you know candidly say there were some stressful situations that came up and you did that for me sometimes too of like all right, we're headed here. Here's what needs to happen next. And I just really appreciate that about your personality and your leadership style. I really liked that a lot.

Matt: [00:12:37] I appreciate it. Thank you very much. I mean I think it comes from just I'm a laid back person at times. But I get intense when I want to accomplish things I have a passion for. I always tell my students every single day we build to that goal and sometimes we're going to take a few steps back. But most days we're going to take a step forward. So we can try and put the drama to the side in the meantime and then just try and work on our goal. I try and tell that to my students every day. So I think that's definitely helped in this project with my demeanor and my leadership.

Bonni: [00:13:17] That's wonderful. And Kelly what was that like for you? Some of the biggest challenges you experienced?

Kelly: [00:13:23] You know I can appreciate what Matt is saying. And I think you warned us about- you warned me about that in the very beginning. So time definitely was absolutely the biggest challenge. So what I did is ahead of time just really kind of laid out the scope of it knowing that we were going to have those time crunches that are so difficult. So that I think is probably just given really.

Kelly: [00:13:48] A couple of things that we experienced I would say as as a challenge- when you're working with a team, a group of people, and there's something about when you write something and you have this ownership of what you write, if someone else steps in and says "we need to make this consistent across the board. So could you change this or move these things around here." Sometimes people get their feelings hurt. So just trying to stay positive and to be kind to people. But then also get them to make some needed changes. That that was tough at times. Not with everybody. Most people, I'd say 90 percent were very open and willing and it that was really helpful. But sometimes it doesn't take much to kind of throw things off a little bit. That was one issue.

Kelly: [00:14:34] The other one I feel was that we all have very different backgrounds. Some are K-12 but we have some that were higher ed and we even had someone in the military. So trying to get everybody to see things in a similar vein because our audience probably would be similar. And so that was a

little bit of a challenge for a few of the members, but that's where teamwork really comes in.

Kelly: [00:14:56] So they would talk with me and say I don't know exactly how to approach this person and remind them that kids don't learn like this or something like that. So just open up the dialogue with team members was really important. So it's kind of an important skill set to be a people person and to kind of iron and smooth things out if you can. And so that was that was a little challenging.

Bonni: [00:15:19] I would say in both of the cohorts that was certainly a challenge that was surprising for me as well. I'm accustomed to in the kind of work that I do and the way in which I choose to do it, I get a lot of feedback. And again primarily my teaching being in the undergraduate experience more of them are used to getting feedback like that all the time. I mean everything they turn in they're used to getting some kind of feedback on. So it was just an interesting challenge we had with both of the cohorts I would say and something that I sort of grapple with with future opportunities to work on projects like this.

Bonni: [00:15:51] Now that we haven't had a chance to look at some of the challenges, let's celebrate some of the successes. What went well for each of your open textbooks?

Matt: [00:16:01] I'd just say getting it done. And being successful getting it on Amazon.com having it professionally on a Web site. And I feel like just getting it done. And I feel like that for eight weeks we did that really good job given the time constraints. And I think for the first go around and your successful leadership in doing this is we got it done.

Bonni: [00:16:30] It was really cool. We ordered it and each of us had a chance to order it. And then just to hold a physical copy of that darn thing in our hands and to feel what that looks like. I took a picture of myself and now it's on my Web site just because I was like that was a proud moment. Like you said to get it done. One of the things that you did, Matt, was you put your bio on Amazon. They have author central which author central allows people to centralize if you were to write multiple books for example all into one page for you. And so you're up there now if you search for Matt Rhodes, you'll see you in both writing the book but also in author central so people can read more about you. And that was really a fun thing that you took the initiative to do. You did it probably

six months before I finally got to doing mine. So that was really a cool additional opportunity that you took as well.

Bonni: [00:17:23] Kelly, What are some of the successes that you remember from your project?

Kelly: [00:17:28] Yes I agree, getting it done was a big relief. But in terms of success, what I found most exciting and in speaking with my other cohort members what they really liked too is I think a lot of them- they worked together in teams really well. They partnered up on the chapters. And each chapter has its own unique voice, which is very exciting to me. And I really can see the personalities of the authors coming through. That was really my goal was to try to flesh out their heart because I could sense you know some of them were really much into character or something a little more effective in terms of what they wanted to get through. And I feel it really did. And they feel the same way.

Kelly: [00:18:10] And recently we went to DC together and it was so great to all be together because we just kept talking about the book. You know everybody had a copy of it and we were talking about it and sharing. They're just so proud of it, and I am too. And I think it's just something that we carry with us always. Like this was our baby that we all had together. So it was really exciting to see something like that. And everybody feels, even though it's "self published" so to speak, everybody feels like an author. And I think that that's really exciting.

Bonni: [00:18:41] One of the things that you have as a real leadership strength Kelly is your ability to recognize people's strengths. And I mean from the moment I met you, we started talking about this as a possibility. You were already "this person is good at this. This person is good at this." And that was really a great strength that we had in terms of really being able to hit the ground running. And then when we did get off track and things weren't quite going the way we had hoped in certain areas, we had someone in the cohort you'd already identified, her name as Kristen and she is a dental hygiene educator.

Kelly: [00:19:15] And one of the things that was really cool is not only was she of course committed to this project but she had some intrinsic motivation with her job where she ended up really doing more than editing a chapter, so we added her as a writer because truly she did write more than half of a chapter in that particular instance.

Kelly: [00:19:35] But she wanted more publishing credits. And my gosh she's written a ton of academic articles within the Dental Hygiene Educator realm- I

forgot the names of some of the journals she's written for but that was really cool to know that in advance but then also to be able to utilize it because your daughter actually got married also- you knew this from the very beginning. You're like "I'm checked out here" and I actually think that turned out to be really a good healthy thing for all of us. And I haven't really talked to you in person about this yet, but just the idea that I think it would have been hard for you if you had been still just as checked in at the very end to finally say it's done. So it's kind of like it's as done as it was going to get under your leadership. Then it was sort of up to me to then get it and all the various places. And Kristen was instrumental during that period as well. And so it's hard though to say like "it's not perfect. They never will be. In eight weeks, you do the best that you can." But at some point you say it's done enough and I'm putting it out there into the world and that's really cool.

Kelly: [00:20:34] Right. Right. I mean I know we had a chance to go back and redo it. We probably would change a few things or whatever but it's also just nice to say that this was the iteration of this particular project and now maybe it's up to another group to go in there and expand on it.

Matt: [00:20:53] Yeah. Both of the open textbooks took on their own personality. They both are useful in their own- like they achieved their goal. That was pretty cool. And I didn't mention this earlier, but in Matt's case with that cohort we were contacted by someone who had bought the book on Amazon but wanted to adopt it as an open textbook and remix it. I can't remember the name of his institution but that's really a neat experience to say. Oh my gosh this open textbook stuff that actually works and people actually do take advantage of that opportunity to kind of remix and morph.

Kelly: [00:21:28] Kelly, I'm looking forward to that happening with your book as well. Her's is more recent than than Matt's. I think you're I don't know 9 months apart or something like that from your books.

Kelly: [00:21:38] What was really exciting is when we were in Washington D.C., we were meeting with different leaders there in the Education Department and as we were listening to these leaders in Washington talk about this open textbook grant project, we all realized that we have been involved in something that was very current and relevant now. And so that added even more to our excitement about being involved in this project.

Bonni: [00:22:04] Let's spend a few minutes talking about the tools that we use to create the open textbooks and each of you has mentioned Google Docs as

kind of being the central place where we kept our information. And I have used Google Docs a ton. But Matt, you were- cracks me up that it took me this long- you can create a team drive right in there.

Matt: [00:22:28] So Matt has for his cohort- and Kelly I know you at least did it for the Open Textbook, I don't know if you guys use it for other things now. So Matt created a team drive for their entire cohort and now every, not just my class but every class that they take there's folders and they can collaborate and share things and post documents. And that was something I didn't really think about being in Google Docs. And a great way if you're leading a cohort program, a great way for people to have a place to connect and collaborate like that.

Bonni: [00:22:59] And then we also used Pressbooks extensively Pressbooks is built on WordPress so if anyone has ever built a website or edited a Website that's based on WordPress, you create different chapters in there. You can create the different authors, editors, different roles. And it is free to publish a web based version. But there are watermarks and such on the PDFs and their money making philosophy is that many of us will want that printed copy and want to be able to distribute it through places like Amazon. And so there's a small fee per book that you might want to distribute in different ways.

Bonni: [00:23:44] So that's how Pressbooks makes their money. It's always reasonable. I think it's ninety nine dollars normally and then I usually wait until they go on sale minutes like 70 or even maybe a little bit less than that. Some discount there. So what were other tools that you can think of that were helpful for you in terms of collaborating and working on the open textbook.?

Matt: [00:24:03] Well for meetings utilizing Zoom as a way for us to meet online and have meetings. Bonni uses that all the time for her doctoral classes so felt that we'll just see what she's been using as a way for us to meet online. And that was definitely a successful tool for meeting online.

Matt: [00:24:24] Also we use Blackboard Collaborate which is an online virtual portal just like Skype or Zoom to communicate. I know number my cohort members did that as well. And while we were working at these meetings we shared documents via document share or we were just on the same Google Doc working together. And that's primarily what we use for this project for my core. I'm not sure if Kelly's cohort did anything really differently. I want to hear what they did.

Kelly: [00:24:54] Well we did use some of those same tools. We did use the team drive in Google, which was really great. That's the first time I'd seen something like that and it was awesome. And Zoom of course to do so online collaborating.

Kelly: [00:25:06] Rick, one of our cohort members who did a lot of our graphics and our cover used Canva, which is beautiful. It has great graphics and you can get it for free. You can have a paid version to remove some watermarks, but the free version is actually really nice. And then we did want to have some images so we use some free image sites like Pexels. I do think that WordPress has that kind of built in so it was really great to get some free images.

Kelly: [00:25:36] And then we also had a companion piece that went along with this. We used Anchor to do some podcasts. Jonathan in our cohort kind of led the charge on that. And he was so so great. I think he's a little bit of a ham and so he liked setting up these podcasts and he had a good time with it. But we did really utilize quite a bit of technology that that we all had to learn.

Kelly: [00:25:59] So that was part of maybe the challenge but also some of the excitement that we really stretched ourselves. And we were really proud of our final product.

Bonni: [00:26:07] I cannot believe that I didn't have somewhere in my outline the Anchor and doing the podcast because as you said this guy Jonathan in their cohort was just perfect for that role. And he actually used to be I think he said in the army that his training was actually on radio. And of course I go back to like Robin Williams in Good Morning Vietnam that movie long ago. I always laugh like "Let's take our lack of education about a topic and just reduce it down to a movie plot."

Bonni: [00:26:41] But yeah it was so perfect because he had the personality for it. But he also had a good mix of technical skills but also a quest to learn more things that he wasn't already knowledgeable about. And putting those things together, he was amazing and to work with on that. And I'll definitely link to that in the show notes.

Bonni: [00:26:58] The Anchor software is a little quirky and we had some other quirks to try to work through our slots but it was fun to have that product. And he actually then at the very end, our last time together as a cohort ordered everybody little trophies with microphones and had awards for each of us that were so personalized to the contributions we made. That's just the kind of person that he is. And my kids are enamored with this little trophy that I have. It was

awesome. Actually he produced a live podcast that day when we were all together, which I'm not sure if it's up there or not but I'll link to whatever I can find.

Bonni: [00:27:37] So before we get to the recommendations segment, I wanted to ask one final question that each of you and that is for those of us that are professors that are thinking about trying to tackle an open textbook project in our classes, what is your advice for us?

Matt: [00:27:53] My advice is to make sure you have a number of steps for how you want it laid out. For example, say you want to have a six chapter book and you're going to have a number of teams tackling each chapter and then you have a topic that you want to do it on but let the students have that ownership and kind of choose what niche topic within that within that topic to really discuss.

Matt: [00:28:24] And then just having you know a number of meetings to help organize the book and then it's going to require your leadership as the professor to work with the student leaders and students just to make sure everyone's on task. I think it's a lot of work for the professor. And I think if you're willing to put in the work and work with the student leaders and students, then you're going to have a successful book and experience.

Kelly: [00:28:54] Yeah I agree with what Matt is saying if you're using it let's say as a project to work on with your students. I think if you're using it though maybe as kind of a central resource for your class, it would be important to ask yourself what can you do better than a textbook publisher? Other than the fact that you can be free. So maybe, what's the value added? And make sure that you highlight that particular aspect.

Kelly: [00:29:23] I do agree as well with Matt about laying out the scope of the work because you want to do that ahead of time, otherwise we're going to get lost in the weeds which is very easy to do something like this. For us, we had to really consider our "why" in doing this. Obviously we were doing it for a grade and it was something new, but we weren't experts at anything at that point so part of our journey was sort of this collective inquiry. We were discovering as we were building. But if you're already an expert in something, then maybe just ask yourself why do I want to do something like this? And what is it that I want my students to walk away from my class knowing that they are not going to get from a publisher? So what makes class unique? What is unique about my

approach? And really maybe leverage some technologies to include that in order to flesh out whatever special about you as a professor.

Bonni: [00:30:18] I wanted to just mention one other resource I've come across since working with both of your cohorts and that is the idea of having people sign a release. And I'm going to post a link to this in the show notes because at the Digital Pedagogy Lab, there was someone, Jade Davis was a keynote speaker there and she had a resource there for recommending people have when you're doing open education, having people sign releases. And I did have people sign a cobbled together release and it came first in Matt's cohort but it came a little bit late.

Bonni: [00:31:03] And I think some people- the impression I got from reading some of the anonymous evaluations was at least in one person's sense that I was pressuring them to sign this. And so I would really want to come out much earlier in the process and explain this is what you have an option to do. No one's required to do it but if you'd like to do it then what you'll need to think about is this is a release. That your name can show up in the book. But also you could be anonymous. There's lots of ways to participate in this, but people have a lot more apprehension about working in open spaces than I'll ever probably be able to fully fathom and and be sensitive enough on.

Bonni: [00:31:43] So that's just something I have to continually work on is how much fear can be around something like this. And we talked earlier about the feedback. I mean that's a lot of fear and so how can I be more sensitive to that fear? And also how can I help I guess not move- I don't want to say move us past it- but acknowledge it but also then have options for what to do about that fear. Because sometimes fear is a good thing. Sometimes we do something that's scary to us and we come out the other side and there's really positive exciting reactions.

Bonni: [00:32:13] In both of your cases, I feel particularly bonded to specific people and your cohorts and each of you because of these experiences. And for all of us we're doing something that is scary for us, putting ourselves out there in this way. And it's fun to do it together and it's fun to do with people that care and are as competent as you are and many members of your cohort. So that was really cool but I'll link to that sign a release form as well.

Bonni: [00:32:38] Before we get to the recommendations segment, I did want to acknowledge that today's episode is sponsored by Text Expander. And if you've been listening to the show for a while you know that I am a big fan of theirs. I

was a huge fan before they became sponsors and it's so fun to have a software company that I love so much also helping to defray some of our expenses for Teaching in Higher Ed.

Bonni: [00:33:01] Text Expander is a piece of software that works on windows or the Mac, it also works on our smart devices where we can type in a few characters and have that text expand into something much larger. Like I do the show notes I build off of a Text Expander what's called a snippet. So I just type in "tihesn" and it asks me who's your guest? And what's your recommendation this week? And it lets me plug in that information and get it all down.

Bonni: [00:33:33] I forever forget my work phone number because I never call it so I just have a little Text Expander snippet that I type in any time I'm asked for my work phone number. Same thing with our P.O. Box, I just don't type at enough to remember and so it is wonderful. And even if you don't remember what your snippet is because that happens to me too. I haven't type that one in in a while. There's a menu that just lives up in your computer that you can just click and go to the Text Expander and click on the one you want and it will expand that text out.

Bonni: [00:34:03] And Text Expander can be used even in teams and so this going to be a wonderful way to keep more consistency if you're in some kind of an environment like Student Affairs or admissions where you're sending out similar texts and you want that professionalism to be across your entire department. It can be particularly helpful.

Bonni: [00:34:21] And a number of us were brainstorming in the Teaching and Higher Ed Slack channel about how we could use Text Expander to make students requests for letters of reference more efficient. So that's something that I've been noodling around with a little bit and look forward to continuing to do that with that community.

Bonni: [00:34:37] So thanks again to Text Expander for sponsoring today's episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. And if you go to the show notes at teachinginhighered.com/225, there's a link where you can get a discount for Text Expander and also indicate that you heard about it from Teaching in Higher Ed so they know that our listeners are also getting a lot out of their product as well.

Bonni: [00:34:59] This is the point in the show where we each get to give some recommendations. And I have a musical recommendation for today. I had a

number of people tell me that I should watch the movie *The Greatest Showman*. And my response was always, "Well I'm not really a big fan of the circus," and they're like, "It doesn't matter, just to watch the movie!"

Bonni: [00:35:20] So I finally did watch the movie when I went to the Canvas LMS Conference and I watched on the airplane and it was absolutely phenomenal. But what I like probably even more than the movie is the soundtrack. It's just absolutely amazing. And my kids all love it now too. And we're just singing up a storm in the car and here at home we're having dance parties while we brush our teeth at night. And so I'm going to recommend that people check out *The Greatest Showman* soundtrack. It also is a great movie but I think even more than that the music is just spectacular.

Bonni: [00:35:53] And Matt, I'm going to pass it over to you for whatever you have to recommend.

Matt: [00:35:58] I recommend a book. I was recently in China looking at various K-12 schools and universities as part of a doctoral trip. And we read a book that relates to China and its education system along with its culture that really helped me understand China more and their transition to a market economy when I got there. So I recommend *The Return of the God of Wealth: The Transition to a Market Economy in Urban China*.

Matt: [00:36:30] So really gives us a great portrait of what China was in the 1980s and 90s and it really does show its development and why China is the super power it is today. And it is great seeing all the various aspects of its culture and work before I actually saw it myself. So I highly recommend this book before you go to China. And I highly recommend if you get a chance someday, to go to China. Definitely a different place to go see and it's a great culture and I hope that everyone can make it some day in their lives.

Bonni: [00:37:04] Thanks Matt, it sounds like a fascinating book. And Kelly, what do you have to recommend?

Kelly: [00:37:09] Well I'm the person that I recommend is actually a podcast. You introduced us to so many things like know social media and things like that. And so kind of got hooked on *The Savvy Psychologist*. Her name is Ellen Hendrickson and she is just so fantastic. She's part of that quick and dirty tips, like grammar girl and all of that. So they kind of have a quirky perspective on things. But so much of what she talks about are not only the value of things like social media but also maybe what some of the pitfalls are in terms of our young people.

We've been dealing here with, the school site where I work with cyber bullying and some issues like that. So it's really good to just kind of find out firsthand what young people might be going through and how we as educators and really support them. We don't always know what's going on out there. So much is so new. She definitely keeps herself on the cutting edge of not only what's happening in psychology, but also what's happening with young people in media. I really appreciate what she has to say.

Kelly: [00:38:10] And she's also just recently published a book How To Be yourself talking about social anxiety and also how social media can contribute to that. And so you know you want to be wise when you're out there either in public or online. And so I really appreciate her perspective, she has interesting stuff.

Bonni: [00:38:30] I didn't realize- because you told me about the book, but I didn't realize that she addressed the social media elements that sounds really interesting. And I think I could probably expand my empathy even more, which I hope to continue to do around some of the real fears that people have legitimate fears. And so that would be a helpful one for me to look at as well. Thank you so much to both of you for these recommendations.

Bonni: [00:38:49] And Matt and Kelly, thank you for taking the risk to write an open textbook and come on a podcast to talk to thousands of people from around the world. You're just not stopping are you? You're just going to soak it all up. It's so great to have you here and get to have this conversation.

Matt: [00:39:06] Thanks for having me.

Kelly: [00:39:08] Yeah. Thanks Bonni. This has been fantastic. Again you just continue to push us out there out of our comfort zone. But it's all good stuff.

Bonni: [00:39:17] I figure if I'm going to be out of my comfort zone, I might as well have some company, right.

Matt: [00:39:20] The more the merrier.

Bonni: [00:39:22] The more the merrier indeed.

Bonni: [00:39:26] Thanks once again to Kelly Robinette and Matt Rhodes for coming on this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed to talk about your experience in such wonderful project leads on your respective open textbook projects. If you'd like to take a look at their open textbooks, come on over to the show

notes at teachinginhighered.com/225 and there will be links to their open textbooks and also if you'd like to order them on Amazon, I'll make those links available as well.

Bonni: [00:39:57] And thanks to all of you for listening and for your continued support of Teaching in Higher Ed. If you'd like to support the growth of the podcasts one of the best ways is to show a colleague just how easy it is to subscribe to the podcast using the podcast app they probably already have on their phone and might even not know. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.

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