

Transcript of BC Studies Episode Two: “Who Makes Scholarly Podcasts?”

[Introductory music: “Mist” by Devon Throness]

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Hello and welcome to the second episode of the BC Studies Podcast mini-series “An Introduction to Scholarly Podcasting.” My name is Isabelle Ava-Pointon; I’m the Podcast Coordinator at *BC Studies*, and I’m also your host today. I would like to start by acknowledging that this podcast was recorded and produced on the traditional, ancestral, unceded, and shared territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

In today’s episode, we’ll be asking the question “Who Makes Scholarly Podcasts?”, and we have six guests who have offered to come help us answer it. First, we have Dr. David Gaertner: Assistant Professor of First Nations and Indigenous Studies at the University of British Columbia. He’s also an Assistant Editor [CORRECTION: Dr. Gaertner is an Associate Editor] and New Media Curator at *BC Studies*. Next, we have Dr. Brenna Clarke Gray, the Coordinator of Educational Technologies at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC. Third is Charles Woods, a PhD candidate at Illinois State University studying Rhetoric, Writing Studies, and Technical Communications. Fourth is Dr. Michael Faris, Associate Professor of English at Texas Tech University. Then there’s Dr. Jentery Sayers, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Victoria, and finally, Dr. Kyle Stedman: Assistant Professor of English at Rockford University in Illinois.

I do want to mention that all of these interviews were conducted over Zoom, due to COVID-19, so the audio quality might be a little bit rough in places.

The first question I asked my guests was to explain how they were currently involved in podcasting. I wanted to get an idea of the full range of ways that scholars and podcasters can be involved in the medium. My first guest, David Gaertner, focused on his role teaching podcasting.

David Gaertner:

The last big project I did was through CiTR and through Madeleine Taylor there, who’s since moved on to a different program, but we did a project called “What Language Does Your Land Speak?” where we did soundscapes, and we had students engage with the land purely by remixing sound. So there was no original content recorded, well, unless it was them on the land with a Zoom mic or something, but other than that, people were splicing up some of Trudeau’s speeches or they were remixing Tribe Called Red overtop of discourse from the White Paper – doing really beautiful and fascinating work there. So that’s where the majority of my expertise has gone now, it’s working and supporting students through that.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

While David Gaertner focuses on teaching students how to use podcasts, Brenna Clarke Gray focuses on teaching faculty how to use podcasts to teach and to disseminate their research

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm interested in podcasts as a mode of disseminating scholarship. I create a podcast at TRU campus, a teaching and learning podcast, that's designed to provide sort of just-in-time, really digestible, pedagogical support to faculty during the remote online-learning period. So, just a way of reminding folks that our office exists and the support that we offer, but also talking about the research around teaching and learning and sharing resources with our community in that way.

I'm also involved in the forthcoming Amplify Podcast Network, which I'm sure you've talked to other folks about in this context, and the podcast I will be making for that show is called "Community of Praxis," and it's an opportunity for thinkers in pedagogy and educational technologies to come and do a sort of feature interview, and then myself and another colleague who's a classroom teacher in the Lower Mainland in an English department, will unpack the interview, and talk about the practical applications of the research and conversation portion.

And then, in addition, I support faculty making podcasts, either for their research dissemination or for classroom practice, helping students use podcasts for assignments that kind of thing. So kind of the whole gamut. I love podcasting as a medium, and I think it has so much promise and potential, and there's so much interesting stuff just already being done, in the post-secondary space in particular.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Now, Brenna mentioned the Amplify Podcast Network, which is a really cool new project bringing together scholarly podcasters from around Canada. You can find out more about them on their website, which is in our Show Notes.

Meanwhile, like Brenna, Charles Woods is also using his expertise to help students, teachers, and institutions adopt podcasts as part of their pedagogy.

Charles Woods:

I make and study podcasts. As a maker, I'm the creator, host, and producer of "The Big Rhetorical Podcast." As a researcher, I've presented and researched and led workshops on specific podcasts, as well as how instructors can implement podcasts into their pedagogy. I also work with institutions who want to implement podcasts into their curriculum and digital publish-facing materials to extend their reach.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Michael Faris takes a similar three-pronged approach to podcasting, as a creator, teacher, and researcher.

Michael Faris:

I make and study digital work and assign it quite a bit. I guess I can start with podcasting in particular – as audio editing and audio-related stuff. I have an edited collection with Kyle Stedman and Courtney Danforth on Soundwriting Pedagogies. It's a collection of born-digital

chapters that argue for a variety of approaches to sonic rhetorics and to teaching what we call soundwriting – or writing with sound, or producing with sound – especially in undergraduate, but also graduate, writing and rhetoric courses.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Meanwhile, Jentery Sayers focuses on how podcasts can be used in a classroom environment.

Jentery Sayers:

I'm wrapping up a course called "Readers Are Listening". It's a graduate seminar at UVic. There's twelve of us there, and I think it's a good time to experiment with this sort of work, given the pandemic – to think about different ways that we can be communicating asynchronously, for example. So they've been, for twelve weeks now, doing various audio experiments, working on things like studying audiobooks, radioplays, podcasts... and we had a module too on the role of sound design in games, to some degree some voiceover and film. So I guess you could say, like, with a class like that in mind, I am really interested in the combination of theory and practice in media studies. And then in this particular case, and just more broadly, how podcasting is part of a longer history of audio experiments. So I think a more macro-level field-level way of looking at it would be – I'm not really a communications scholar, so maybe not the radio side so much of podcasting, like the transmission and network side of what a podcast is, but more the composition side: the use of voice, understanding of audience, but also the kind of potential for literary material in audio.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Finally, Kyle Stedman is currently mostly interested in the publishing potential of podcasts.

Kyle Stedman: I'm especially interested to see how people use sound to publish about sound... if that makes sense. There are plenty of places, and these are good and okay, , you know, where people are writing linguistic texts, alphabetical books and articles saying "here's all these interesting things about sound." And that... there are so many good friends I have, I've done it myself, but I always like it more when I can hear people talk about sound. And they can say "let me show you this experience, let me give you an example of the kinds of effects that I'm discussing with my theory. So I'm always kind of on the lookout for more places like that.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Now that I had an idea of all the different ways that scholars were currently engaging with podcasts, I wanted to know these scholars got to this place. David Gaertner credits community radio with introducing him to the production and study of sound.

David Gaertner:

I've been involved in community radio since my early twenties, and so actually at UBC, I started out with CiTR and doing broadcasting through them. So that's, you know, where I learned to edit sound.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Another path to the study of podcasts is through grad studies, and a historical perspective. This is how Jentery Sayers got involved with sound.

Jentery Sayers:

Most of the work that's now related to podcasting, I started as a graduate student doing work in Media Studies, and maybe more specifically in Sound Studies. So my dissertation was on the relationship between experimental uses of audio and fiction in the twentieth century – and a little bit in the late nineteenth, specifically around magnetic recordings. Basically, artists and authors doing odd things with magnetic tape, for example, wire, and then later, the hard drive. And it was partly an historical argument about the role that magnetic recording had played in fiction, but it was really about how we listen to fiction, and how we might develop different techniques for listening.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon:

Meanwhile, Brenna's path was different. It was her personal love of listening to podcasts that drove her to create, and eventually study, them.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I have been listening to podcasts – oh gosh – for a really long time. My husband and I moved across the country twice: once, well sort of halfway, once from Ontario to New Brunswick, and then once from New Brunswick to British Columbia. And we don't have the same taste in music *at all*. And so podcasts are a really great way to pass time on long journeys. And I found myself really, I don't know, migrating to a space where I don't find myself listening to music nearly as often, as I want to hear conversation. There's something really intimate and inviting about podcasting. Particularly when you've listened to the same show for a really long time, you develop a kind of a relationship with the hosts. You feel a sense of ownership over the show, you feel a deep connection to what the show is, and how it works. And you kind of feel a weird sort of, like tertiary friendship with the hosts. So I'd listened to podcasts for years and years and years, and really appreciated that. And I definitely grew up in the kind of house where all the radios are locked onto the CBC, like you change the station on penalty of death basically, [laughs] and so that idea of a certain kind of radio voice ever-present in the background is really important to me. So I'm always listening to podcasts. And then, a few years ago, a friend and I decided to make a podcast, it's called Hazel and Katniss and Harry and Starr, it's a young adult literature podcast. And it's not explicitly a scholarly podcast, although we both have scholarly backgrounds, and we both work in universities. But we were really just looking to kind of hang out together, have some fun, read some books, watch some movies, sort of enjoy each other's company and record it, because we're Millennials and apparently that's something we feel like is necessary [laughs]. But what really sort of surprised me was one day my friend, Hannah McGregor, we were talking about scholarly podcasting, and I was like "I'd like to, you know, get involved in scholarly podcasting" and she was like "you do make a scholarly podcast" and I was like "no I don't, I make a fun podcast where I talk about books" and she was like "yeah, you regularly explain theory to listeners, and bring in criticism as part of your conversation" and I was like "oh yeah, I guess we kinda do" and she's like "in a really accessible way! Which is exactly what podcasting is great for." And that was kind of a lightbulb moment for me.

Isabelle Ava-Pointon

With all these answers in mind, how can we now answer the question “Who makes scholarly podcasts?” While I think the obvious answer is, anyone can, it’s helpful to see examples of real-life podcasters and scholars who work with the medium.

So now that we know who makes scholarly podcasts, the next question is why. Tune in next week to hear how our guests answer this question, as well as, perhaps, my own two cents. In the meantime, you can check out our show notes on our website, bcstudies.com, for transcripts, citations, and further readings. We also encourage you to submit your own original research as a scholarly podcast to *BC Studies*. All the details are, of course, on our website as well.

Finally, we would like to thank musician Devon Throness, for letting us use his song “Mist” in this podcast. “Mist” was composed, performed, and recorded by Devon Throness, Copyright 2021 ThronessMusic.

[Concluding Music: “Mist” by Devon Throness]