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Ben Cahn:	Welcome to the UP Tech Talk Podcast. Coming to you from the Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland Campus.
	Produced by: Academic Technology Services.
	Welcome to the UP Tech Talk Podcast, this is Ben Cahn. I'm the Academic Technology Specialist and Trainer at the University of Portland. Today, I'm joined by my co-host, Maria Herb. Hello, Maria.
Maria Herb:	Hey, Ben.
Ben Cahn:	Hey, Maria! And today we have with us in the studio Professor Lars Larson, from the University of Portland Department of English. Thanks for joining us, Lars.
Prof L. Larson:	Happy to be here.
Ben Cahn:	So, today, we were going to discuss so take-aways from a recent talk that you gave on campus, that I understand was very well attended and was very excellent, called the Professional Amateur as the Scholarly Teacher.
Maria Herb:	Yeah. And, I was at the talk, so, I was really impressed with how engaging it was and the great discussion that we had afterwards. One thing, that kind of resonated with me was when you talked about your use of technology. The specific sort of way that you approach it with your students, and I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about what your approach is.
Prof L. Larson:	Well, in class I use a lot of technology but students don't tend to think of it in that term or definition in our minds, these days, of technology is involving silicon, and machinery, and electronics, and things like that. I try to get them to see that the analog technology, which I primarily draw from, is under-recognized and quite miraculous. Talk about the codex form that the Romans invented, that's, as an alternative to scroll technology or papyrus, this is a way of binding sheets of paper together or around one side and enfolding it in vellum, or nowadays cardboard. So, that's a pretty durable technology now that Amazon is opening up bricks & mortar shops to sell these codexes rather than the usual Kindle version of platforms. It speaks of its enduring utility.
Maria Herb:	And do your students kind of get on the bandwagon with that, or are they waiting for you to [crosstalk 00:02:32]
Prof L. Larson:	They don't have to ...
Maria Herb:	...pick up a cellphone.

Prof L. Larson:	... get on the bandwagon. They come to recognize it. They see this technology in a new manner. The see the miracle of pens and pencils with lead. They see the tables and chairs, that they don't even think about. But, when I was teaching in India, you know, that wasn't always the common thing. You take these technology forms for granted after living around them all your life. So I guess what I try to do is make students recognize that. And, ultimately we work in the technology of the classroom, which, as I've mentioned in the talk is probably one of the best devices, or machines, to enhance learning. Because it helps block out the ambient noise around you, the various distractions, and in various ways, tries to get students to focus on the challenge of critical thinking.
Maria Herb:	Well, do your students still wait for you to come up with, you know, a tweet? Or post something on Instagram? I mean, are they still kind of saying, "but we know there is more to this than what your telling us?
Prof L. Larson:	I try to validate their platforms. The emerging platforms. But I do warn them that the platforms they're used to nowadays is going to be painfully outdated, just as those who used Myspace. You know, its a joke nowadays. But who knows if Facebook, or whatever is the social media du jour. But I do validate the fact that we are story-telling animals. Its a major theme of my English 112 course, that we can't but help tell stories and we live in an age where our platforms have proliferated in beautiful, amazing ways. The stories are not just in books, codexes, or on our Kindles anymore, they're in video games, they're in the films, of course, and the films we make on YouTube now. So its a miraculous time to be around. I urge them to explore these platforms that are so common to these digital natives, but I also want them to recognize the value of previous generations technology, the ones that work, especially.
	So I tell them I don't have a cell phone, that I've never had one. And I'm not going to be on social media any time soon, but I do try to stalk their lives with a series of reminders of technologies that they've been raised by. Like the stories that their parents told them when they were children, that even thought they're taking an English 112 course, that they never necessarily wanted to (its a requirement at UP), try to show how this has always been something that they have been doing all their lives. Even though it doesn't fit into the model that may be in their minds.
Maria Herb:	Why don't you have a cell phone?
Prof L. Larson:	Why do people have cell phones? I guess that would be the question I go back. Its not a technology that helps me do anything that I don't already have for ...
Ben Cahn:	Uh, Lars, are you familiar with the online slang term "fomo"?
Prof L. Larson:	Fomo? Yes! Definitely.
Ben Cahn:	Fear Of Missing Out, Right?

So, I think you brought up an interesting point, about how we not only have our communication channels proliferated to be so broad and so diverse. Also, just the fact that anyone can jump on and start telling their own stories, and I think that is sort of this common anxiety that a lot of people, the younger generations, myself included, have is that these narratives that are happening and shape our lives are going on all the time. They're all around us, they're widely distributed across all these different platforms, and it can be tough to keep up. And I think that causes some bad habits in people in terms of how they're engaging with some of these different tools and platforms. So, I am just wondering, if you had anything to say about stepping back and not worrying about "fomo" so much as really appreciating what's in front of you, which I think is kind of where you were coming with your perspective on an older technology like the codex?

Prof L. Larson: Yeah, that's exactly it, Ben. I tend to want people to think a little bit less about "fomo" and more about "jomo." "Jomo" is the Joy Of Missing Out.

Ben Cahn: That's a good one.

Prof L. Larson: The way that it dis-encumbers you from having to be involved in things, as a card carrying introvert, and I think the third of introverts that are out there can get a sense of "jomo," having felt it, I'm sure. The Joy of Missing Out. The joy of being able to kind of be, and be quiet, and be alone with your thoughts for a while, that's what the joy feels like I suppose.

Its an illusion that we are missing out on the latest thing that happened. The latest celebrity who died or the latest Tweet from our president. Those, true, those are facts that are happening in the world, but when we pay attention to what comes across on silicon technology, we're ignoring a lot of the thoughts and stories of people who are dead had. The people who can no longer be up to date, and up to the minute, but there were a lot of fantastic thoughts that people had a long time ago and in spaces far, far away. And the older technology has preserved that with the efforts to digitize a lot of that, that's becoming reachable by the current technologies, and all that. And that's great. So I champion that inclusion of the past of so called out-dated material and stories into the present, so that it can be part of the things people fear missing out. But I would hope people fear missing out on things that Chaucer says, and things that Shakespeare says, because a lot of the stuff that people in power, what they have to say, its not all that useful when all is said and done.

Maria Herb: Yeah, I just got back from the Lilly conference on teaching & learning and there are so many sessions now on teaching mindfulness in the classroom and taking pause for students to just have some breathing room ...

Prof L. Larson: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Maria Herb:	And I think that, more and more, that's just a reflection on the fact that their coming in just overwhelmed with keeping up with everything.
Prof L. Larson:	Mm-hmm (affirmative)
Maria Herb:	And they just don't have those spaces in their lives anymore.
Ben Cahn:	I think there is a verging recognition that that's just a 21st century skill that has to be developed.
Maria Herb:	Yeah.
Prof L. Larson:	Mono-tasking, I guess. And that's one thing that the classroom as a technology allows people do, as long as there is some amount of authority that a person can impose and a buy-in from the students that they can see a value in mono-tasking. Thinking about a certain problem, right? Troubleshooting a certain ethical situation brought up by a story, for example. Again, the quiet of a classroom can aid in that collective, 25 person, mono-tasking there.
Maria Herb:	I'm interested in some of your personal views on some of digital technologies. So, what is, if you don't participate in social media, do have a reason for not doing so?
Prof L. Larson:	I don't think I have much to share! I'm less of a story-teller in my life. As a story-catcher, I love to read more than I love to write. I love to think through other people's ideas. And I know that that can happen through social media, but I guess I like things, thoughts, to have been vetted. I don't like stories to have been immediate, the kind of "this is what I had for breakfast,' because it hasn't gone through that process of revision and some weeks to percolate, months, even years. We just finished hosting a Pulitzer Price Winning novelist on our campus, Anthony Doerr, he spent ten years on his book. But he's made something that people can read for decades and find quite useful, which seems like something worthy of our precious, and very finite, time on this planet. So, I think that's it. I want things to be kind of filtered, and vetted, in some ways. I'm certainly interested in my friends and family and all that, but introverts don't tend to like a whole lot of small talk. And I feel like a lot of social media is small talk.
Maria Herb:	Have you noticed any difference in your students, now that they've been, -- What ...ten, ten years in the making with social media, a lot of them, and just having that instant platform for their thoughts-- Instant feedback on anything that they might want to throw out there. Have you seen a change in them as far as just what their contributions in class are?
Prof L. Larson:	I'm always reluctant to make these kind of generational tendencies or stereotypes. I don't trust anecdotal sociology, I guess. So, I don't necessarily note major trends because it might have been just an off day, or it might be just

one student in the room that I am concentrating on and ignoring the other 24 students. And so, I'm reluctant to, and I haven't really noticed anything massive or major. You would think that there would be more confidence in the fact that everybody is now a published writer, with all these great platforms. Everybody makes movies now. Everybody makes music. And, yet, there is still a shyness to getting up in front of the class and reading a poem out loud. So it hasn't necessarily generated that confidence that I would've expected.

The multi-tasking habits, and I was kind of shocked to hear, that to host the visiting writer yesterday, I had people sit in front of a short documentary on Tempest, right. Rather than me be there, I kind of set it up and I left the classroom, and they watched that over a half-hour. Apparently, the minute I left the classroom, a lot of people got out their cell phones, some people talked to each other through the film. I would think that a technology like video, which is so easy, it does all the work for your imagination as a storytelling platform; it does all the work for you, its engaging on its own. But, there is that habit of multi-tasking. So once the figure of authority leaves, one freely, naturally, spontaneously, organically, goes toward the multi-tasking route. So, that's a surprise. But maybe I just love film, and am so surprised when anybody is not instantly riveted toward mono-tasking, watching a film.

Maria Herb: Yeah, I think you brought up a good point, though, about it being habitual. I mean, I don't even think about it anymore, they probably don't either, but the device is on you and you just, I don't know. It's like this anxiety thing, you've got this ten second down-time, you're just going to pull out your phone and "did somebody tweet" you, or whatever. Its habitual now.

Prof L. Larson: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Maria Herb: I'm wondering, because when you brought up the classroom as a technology, do you think that idea is shocking to people now to hear that? Because when we think of classroom technology, of course, we're thinking about wireless connections ...

Prof L. Larson: Yup. Right.

Maria Herb: ... to things and we're thinking of the tech work in classroom. But thinking about the classroom as a technology do think that hits people sort of as a "what?" kind of idea?

Prof L. Larson: Oh yeah. Yeah, no, its a great thing. Artists are always good at radically de-familiarizing the familiar. Any time that I can recruit that strategy as a teacher, I've got them. Right? I've got there attention, at least for maybe, a half-a-minute.

So, I try to pull that strategy out of the hat, every once in a while just to get them to recognize larger spectrums that are out there, that are true, but don't

quite fit the usual categories in their minds. So I think as a teacher, that's one of my jobs. And maybe that will help see them view technology as a spectrum, one that goes back to the bone flutes that homo-sapiens, and neanderthals, themselves made from bird bones. This desire to create technology is in many ways hard-wired from the stone tools that we used. I'd like to see the computer and iPod as kind of connected to that stone, or that bone, because I think it is, in a very palpable way. And I think by seeing that connection it keeps us from being critical of the new technology. "Oh the new technology," or even the old technology dismissive. I try not to be this kind of low-tech elitist, looking down my snoot at people always checking their iPhones, never being present, and all that kind of stuff.

I kind of like to look at things in the big broad evolutionary spectrums. Deep time, this new realm in the history department. Of telling local history, but starting off with the Big Bang and kind of going forward. Seeing those big picture spectrums, I think can help us: One, radically de-familiarize the familiar. And two, give us a sense of wonder at all the technologies that are around there.

Maria Herb: I really like that idea about erasing that line between digital natives and non-digital natives. I mean, when you look at it, the way your talking about it, we've all had technology. Anybody here, and anybody at anytime has always had technology ...

Prof L. Larson: Right.

Maria Herb: ... So why should we draw a distinction between digital technology and non-digital technology?

Prof L. Larson: So, maybe it just means with coming up with more adjectives to precede that word, technologies. So, then again I'm drawn to "analog," "physical" technology, I guess is another way ... Yeah, I'm searching for categories, I guess.

Maria Herb: Yeah, or just thinking about what it was like to be around when the Gutenberg Press ...

Prof L. Larson: Yeah.

Maria Herb: ... came out or, I mean ...

Ben Cahn: Or even, just like, the written language or alphabet.

Maria Herb: Yeah.

Ben Cahn: Even if you didn't have a way to record it. Or a consistent way to record it, just the act of creating symbolism and imbuing it with meaning is a technology as well. Information technology.

Prof L. Larson:	Information technology, right.
	There's histories on Earth, these delicious moments where the older people are criticizing the younger people with their new Gutenberg technologies. In fact, Cuneiform in clay, one of the earliest complaints that you get on those tablets is elder scribes complaining about the younger scribes, and how they're not as good in their technique of mashing their piece into clay. So, you look for those patterns, and you try to avoid falling into the traps off "too-easy" critiques. In all these technologies, they're just different. I think that's the right attitude to have, they're different. Yes, they have some vices. Yes, they have some values. But they're just different. They're fascinating, and I'm fascinated by technology, even if I don't participate in all of them, because none of us really do, after all.
Maria Herb:	Yeah.
Ben Cahn:	True. Very true.
Maria Herb:	Its a good note to end on. I really like that.
Ben Cahn:	Absolutely.
	Well, Lars, thanks for joining us, today and sharing your perspectives with us.
Maria Herb:	Yes. Yes.
Prof L. Larson:	Happy to.
Maria Herb:	Really wonderful thoughts.
Ben Cahn:	Yeah. Yeah, I enjoyed talking with you a lot.
	So, if you don't want to be like Lars ...just joking, because our last guest was a very active Twitter user ...
Maria Herb:	Oh, Randy.
Ben Cahn:	So, I was like if you want to be like Randy, jump on Twitter ...
Maria Herb:	...our last guest
Ben Cahn:	... But, if you would like to keep up with us a UP Tech Talk ...
Maria Herb:	Yes.
Ben Cahn:	... using these digital technologies ...
Maria Herb:	Right.

Ben Cahn:	... you can follow us on Twitter at uptechtalk. Keep up with all our new episodes and all of our guests.
	And you can visit our website at sites.up.edu/techtalk
Maria Herb:	Yes. And all of our podcasts are archived there, and you can check out previous episodes.
Ben Cahn:	That's right.
Prof L. Larson:	Thanks for hosting these conversations.
Ben Cahn:	Okay. Thanks again, Lars. Thanks again, Maria.
Maria Herb:	Thanks, Lars.
Ben Cahn:	And we will see you next time.
Maria Herb:	Bye.
Ben Cahn:	Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP Tech Talk Podcast.
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