January 2019

Blurring Lines-Discovering Black Quotidian and Impacting the Learner: An Interview with Matt Delmont, Professor of History, Arizona State University

David Parker
Alexander Street/ProQuest, dparker@alexanderstreet.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Parker, David (2019) "Blurring Lines-Discovering Black Quotidian and Impacting the Learner: An Interview with Matt Delmont, Professor of History, Arizona State University," Against the Grain: Vol. 29: Iss. 1, Article 18.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7717

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
I am a professor of history at Arizona State University. My presentation centered around the role of historical newspapers and the telling of histories less commonly known or told. His presentation performed significantly better? I am obsessed with my team at Alexander Street and others across the world of education and scholarship to measure the impact of video in particular, but other media as well. We track page views, time on page, device used for viewing, referring urls, most popular titles, etc. But how do we know when a video or image has been shown in class to a student watches a video before a test and performs significantly better? I am obsessed with this line of questioning at this moment in time because I see libraries and librarians increasingly using cost-per-view and raw usage data as a measure of the “return on investment.” I believe we need to present other data points alongside usage data to explore the impact of content on the learner. Matt’s work on Black Quotidian struck me as a perfect foil to explore this question of continued on page 34.

against the Grain / February 2017

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>  33
This tends to be more anecdotal. People will message me on twitter, send me emails, or stop me at conferences to say that they like the project. I’ve also presented on this project to different audiences (to scholars interested digital humanities, to high school teachers, to ProQuest’s marketing and programming staff) and these small group interactions have helped me see what aspects of the project really resonate. I always ask how many people have heard of Claudette Colvin (she was a fifteen-year-old who refused to give up her seat nine months before Rosa Parks, but she did not become a symbolic figure of the Civil Rights movement), and usually only a few people raise their hands. Sharing these histories is what makes me excited about the project.

As a scholar and classroom teacher, how do you assess the impact of your work beyond the traditional measures of, say, citations of your scholarly work?

Researching and writing short daily posts has reinvigorated my relationship to scholarship. I continue to be surprised by the amazing stories that live in the archives of Black newspapers, and it is fun to be able to share several hundred of these stories with web audiences. I have come to view scholarly communication, via Twitter and elsewhere, as an everyday process rather than something that happens every few months at conference or every few years in articles and books. It is nice to be able to briefly discuss new research finds without having to write 8,000 or 80,000 words on every topic. The project is changing how I think about, write about, and teach African American history. From this perspective, Black Quotidian and similar digital projects count by fostering new thematic pathways to allow readers to explore this research in different ways. My next book project is on African American basketball and I will pursue the material through a podcast. When I see something that I think is interesting, I’ll do some research to see if I can find an article about it. If I can’t find such a mention, I’ll look for a specific event that was historically important (e.g., the March on Washington). While some of these posts features well-known figures like Carter G. Woodson, Rosa Parks, and Shirley Chisholm, I am also excited to learn and share the stories of people and events not commonly featured in textbooks, documentaries, or Black History Month celebrations.

Which selections have generated the most views? And the most “impact” in your view?

The post from April 4, 1968, which featured headlines and articles from the black press after Martin Luther King’s assassination, generated the most page views. My favorite post was from March 31, 1934 about a women’s basketball team sponsored by the Philadelphia Tribune.

What is next for you?

I have two upcoming projects that are connected to Black Quotidian in different ways. After I complete a year of daily posts for Black Quotidian (in January 2017), in the project’s second phase I will write analytical essays drawing on black newspapers and other multimedia sources, and develop flexible thematic pathways to allow readers to explore this research in different ways. My next book project is on African Americans in World War II and, while this will be a traditional print book, it will draw heavily on black newspapers.

Scopus, ScienceDirect, SciVal and Pure, leading journal and society partner sites and CiteScore metrics. Tom Gilson and I had an intriguing phone conversation with the engaging and filled-with-enthusiasm Andrea Michalek, Managing Director of Plum Analytics the other day. Watch for our interview in the next issue of ATG (April?). Plus we are planning to do a Podcast with Andrea soon!

Speaking of Podcasts, have you all clicked on the link on the ATG NewsChannel? We have been overwhelmed with the success of our podcasts! We just began them two weeks ago and we have had well over 900 visits! Who would have thought!? Thanks to the team of the quick study and implementer Don Lewis, the incomparable Leah Hinds, and there-is-nothing-he-can’t-do Tom Gilson! New Podcasts are being added every week so why not use a bookmark! http://www.against-the-grain.com/2917

Jim Mullins, dean of libraries and the Esther Ellis Norton Professor, has announced that he will retire from Purdue on Dec. 31. “Since joining Purdue in 2004, Jim has instituted innovative changes to improve and promote access to research and information for faculty, staff, students and visitors to Purdue,” says Deba Dutta, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs and diversity. “Under Jim’s leadership, Purdue Libraries has emerged as an international leader in information literacy — including the first endowed professorship — scholarly communication, data management, and archives and special collections. He has helped Purdue conceptualize and create a new form of library and learning spaces, a vision that will be fully realized with the opening this fall of the Wilmet Active Learning Center.” In 2015, Purdue Libraries received the Excellence in University Library Award of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the highest distinction among academic libraries in the U.S. In 2016, Mullins received the prestigious Hugh A. Atkinson Award by the American Library Association in recognition of his outstanding leadership and his many contributions to research libraries. Mullins’ contributions extend far beyond Purdue. He has served in leadership roles in countless library organizations and has an impressive publication and presentation agenda. Jim Mullins and Charles Watkinson developed Purdue University Press’ the Charleston Insights in Library, Archival, and Information Sciences Series. Plans to launch a search for identifying the next leader for Purdue Libraries will be announced in the coming weeks. http://www.against-the-grain.com/2017/02/pep-people-in-the-news-2917/ http://www.theexpress.purdue.edu/series/charleston-insights-library-archival-and-information-sciences

Speaking of retirements, had a delightful luncheon this weekend with the glamorous (Charlotte Initiative) October Ivinson and (don’t you love his accent?) Will Wakeling who retired from Northeastern on December 3.

Sure you saw the article in Science about the disappearance of Jeffrey Beall’s list of predatory publishers — “Mystery as controversial list of predatory publishers disappears.” continued on page 50