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

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that are exploring sustainability scenarios and establishing governance systems and revenue models. For example, we're currently working with the Software Preservation Network to help this group to instantiate strong community and business models to support ongoing community-driven work.

ATG: *In his plenary session, at this year's Charleston Conference James G. Neal, incoming President of ALA, said that by 2026 there will be no information and services industry targeting products to the library marketplace. Content and applications will be directed to the consumer. Do you see a similar future? Where do you see the scholarly publishing community in ten years?*

KS: I agree with **Jim Neal** that products are increasingly directed at consumers rather than at libraries. As for what that will mean in ten years... there are just so many variables at play. It is harder to predict right now what the impact of that trend will be on scholarly communications and its many producers. Higher education is under fire in many environments, both public and private. I think the *response* of higher education — meaning faculty and administrators and students and librarians and technologists and university publishers — to the still-increasing privatization of knowledge dissemination channels is something to watch closely.

Scholars and publishers and administrators have the opportunity right now to demonstrate our values and expand our "market" through championing a more open discourse and knowledge diffusion network that stretches well beyond the so-called "Ivory Tower." That could be a game changer. I am convinced that a lot of what we produce in the Academy could

travel further and bear positive influence on our society and culture. If we miss that opportunity and if our scholarly communications continue to be trapped mostly within the academy, we will miss a crucial opportunity to reach a broader public with the research we produce.

ATG: *If you were sitting in our place conducting this interview, what question would you ask yourself?*

KS: I would ask myself "What do you think the future holds for communities, consortia, and nonprofits in scholarly communications? Where can they have the best impact?" That's the question I wish more folks were asking.

I keep hearing thought leaders in the field saying that there are too many consortia, nonprofits, and membership communities in the library and information space, that we should centralize those, investing in one or two rather than supporting so many different approaches and groups. Looking at the system through an organizational modeling lens, I have to disagree. Centralization has rarely done good things for the library or for knowledge dispersion. Centralized agencies tend to be top heavy and expensive to run; they also tend to be both slow and steady. They're great forces to have in a field, as long as they're complimented by dispersed, diffuse approaches and voices that enable community-driven innovations to emerge and thrive. But focusing on centralization leads to a drop in diversification. It also yields stagnation and can hinder innovation, as we can see in so many other fields. There's simply a limit to how many voices can speak and be heard in a centralized, large setting. Smaller communities have the ability to encourage and grow lots of leaders, lots of innovators. They are incredibly valuable tools within our field.

I think that right now, we have lots of artificial barriers between institutions that need to

be broken down, and I see community-driven consortia and nonprofits as key in this work. Regional consortia, for example, often pull together a wide range of players — libraries of different sizes and focuses that happen to be geographically co-located. That can be tremendously powerful in breaking down silos and ensuring that the solutions we build take the needs of the whole system into account. For example, in digital preservation, if you have only research libraries collaborating, you run the risk of building digital preservation solutions that only account for the research library community, neglecting the sheer volume of content dispersed in all of the smaller, less resourced institutions. I think that achieving scale in something like digital preservation requires us to think past our narrow concept of who our peers are and work together across boundaries of rank and size and shape and form. Regional associations and networks provide a powerful apparatus for that kind of exploration, relationship building, and work together across institutions of different sizes and shapes.

ATG: *We always like to end our interviews on a personal note so we were wondering what you like to do for fun during your down time. Do you have any activities you particularly enjoy? Do you have any personal recommendations that you like to share about the best book you've read lately, or the best movie you've seen recently?*

KS: Honestly, reading to my kiddos is my absolute favorite thing to do right now. **Gabe** is eight and **Wes** is almost six, and we just finished the first three *Harry Potter* books and just started a **Diane Wynne Jones** novel. I cannot WAIT until they're old enough for the *Chrestomanci Quartet!* There really is nothing better this winter than to declare "let's read a chapter" and have those two jump into the couch and snuggle up beside me. 🐾

Blurring Lines — Discovering Black Quotidian and Impacting the Learner: An Interview with Matt Delmont

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I met **Matt Delmont** during a presentation he gave at the **ProQuest** offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the summer of 2016. **Matt** is a professor of history at **Arizona State University**: <https://mattdelmont.com/> **Matt's** presentation centered around the role of historical newspapers and the telling of histories less commonly known or told. His website, *Black Quotidian*: <http://blackquotidian.com/amvc/black-quotidian/index> focuses on everyday stories with daily entries selected at **Matt's** discretion.

Over the past year I have been increasingly curious (obsessed?) with efforts by 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 hundreds of students? How do we know when an article has changed the course of a person's educational path? How do we know when

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

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impact. Certainly the meaning and value of a student or scholar's interaction with a daily entry on **Matt's** site cannot be measured so simply as number of page view. What follows is an interview with **Matt** discussing *Black Quotidian* and how **Matt** thinks about the impact of his work.

What was the impetus behind creating *Black Quotidian*? Were you primarily driven to serve undergraduate learners or scholars?

My goal with *Black Quotidian* is to bring African American history and black newspapers to new audiences in a novel format. So the audience for the site includes scholars and students, but also people outside of the academy who might see one of my tweets and want to learn more about these topics. When we teach history we make difficult choices about what to include and exclude. *Black Quotidian* is my small act of rebellion against the pressure to fit African American history into a single month or a fifteen-week semester.

How are you monitoring usage on the site? What are your key measures of usage?

I'm monitoring visits to the website using basic Google Analytics on visitors, page views, and session duration. I circulate the new posts primarily via Twitter, so I also keep track of the tweet activity. The site has received over 23,000 page views in the first eight months. This isn't a lot for a commercial site, but it is way more than my academic journal articles have received.

Impact, that is touching and changing lives, is difficult to measure in online platforms. How do you "measure" the impact of *Black Quotidian*?

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 in 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 or renewing a sense of scholarly curiosity and experimentation.

What is your selection process for inclusion of articles in *Black Quotidian*?

On most days I'll pick a specific newspaper and date (e.g., the *Cleveland Call and Post* on October 15, 1946) and then look for an article that I think is interesting. In some cases, 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. 🌿

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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 y'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.atgthepodcast.com/>

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 **Wil-meth 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/atg-people-in-the-news-2917/>

<http://www.thepress.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 Ivins** 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,"

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