

## *Open Minds ... from Creative Commons*

### **Episode 20: Trudi Radtke on InclusiveAccess.org**

[00:00:00] **Ony:** Welcome to Open Minds from Creative Commons. I'm Ony Anukem CC's Communications and Campaigns Manager. Our Open Minds podcast is a series of conversations with people working on the issues we're involved with and the subjects were excited about. Each episode, we sit down with amazing guests who are working to make the internet and our global culture more open and collaborative. In this episode, Jennryn Wetzler cc's director of learning and training talks, all things Open Education and inclusive access textbooks with Trudi Radtke former Open Education Project Manager at SPARC. InclusiveAccess.org is a community driven initiative that launched in 2001 to raise awareness of the facts about automatic textbook billing. The initiative was developed by SPARC and Creative Commons is one of the partners. This episode was recorded in June, 2022 when Trudi was the open Education project manager at SPARC. In this role, they spearheaded advocacy and implementation for initiatives to make education. More open and equitable. Including inclusive access.org. Prior to working at SPARC Trudi was an education technology specialist, OER specialist and open consultant in the California community college system. As an open and OER consultant, they have assisted in the creation of over 120 open textbooks and several Z degree pathways, Trudi as passionate about open and has advocated for OER at the state regional and international levels. So enough from me, let's hear from Trudi and Jennryn.

[00:01:54] **Jennryn:** So first thank you so much for joining this. I'm really delighted to have a chance to chat with you a bit more. And I actually wanted to start off with a question just about podcasts in general, since you're also a big podcast fan, what is your favorite podcast right now?

[00:02:11] **Trudi:** Oh, that is such a good question. I'm kind of torn between saying 99 PI or 99% invisible, which is a design podcast hosted by Roman Mars. He's fabulous. And then the other one would be The Memory Palace, which is just like an incredible little vignette type podcast episodes are like, usually not more than 20 minutes, more often they're like six minutes, eight minutes. It's wonderful and it's just these like historical vignettes and it's very character driven. It's just fabulous. It's honestly hard to describe. I think I'd have to go with that one. I'd have to say The Memory Palace is my favorite and they don't offer episode descriptions, so you just kind of have to like jump in and well, adventure literally, and that they're so fabulous. They're great.

[00:02:55] **Jennryn:** Oh, I can't wait to check it out. Thank you for the tips. Yeah I love podcasts too. I'm currently just on a much more of a light happy go lucky podcast kick given, you know, all circumstances right now. So my podcast du jour is SmartLess.

[00:03:12] **Trudi:** Oh yes. Oh my goodness, of course.

[00:03:15] **Jennryn:** I'll have to check out Memory Palace for sure. Okay. So, I mean, in terms of today, I would love to dive into InclusiveAccess.org. But before we do tell me a little bit more about you, like why you are in open education and how you first got involved.

[00:03:32] **Trudi:** Sure. Absolutely. So I guess I've given this so many times at conferences and speaking engagements, I call it the spiel now but it really feels very personal to me. And I still get kick out telling the story because I feel very much connected to open education on a personal level. So I'm a first generation college student and I come from a lower socioeconomic background. So when I first went to college, I quite frankly had absolutely no idea how it worked. I was just very excited to be there. I started at a California community college and I distinctly remember going to purchase my textbooks for that semester, from the college bookstore. And I was so excited and I had my little sheet and I went to the back and they got all my books for me and I brought them to the front and they rang them all up. And the sticker price was like \$700 for all of those books. And I was completely floored. I was like this little 18 year old and it had never occurred to me—I don't know why, but had never occurred to me—the books would be that expensive. And I never occurred my parents either because there wasn't a lot of like collegiate experience in my family background and I just couldn't, I couldn't afford it. I literally left that college bookstore with no books and I went online, I price compared and it was much more feasible to do Amazon and stuff like that, but it still was too expensive for me personally, for where I was at at that point in my life. And I pretty much went through my entire undergraduate career almost never buying textbooks just because I couldn't afford them. So I consider that kind of my introduction to open education because when I was in my undergraduate degree, I still had to get a hold of learning materials because I wanted to be successful in my courses. So I would just go online and just kind of organize, like I had all these bookmarks for my classes and I would just find resources online to supplement what I was learning in class to succeed on the tests and the assessments. And another thing I would end up doing is if there was something that I really, you know, really needed to study and I wanted to mark it up, I would literally like download internet resources and put them in a binder and then mark them up with like a Sharpie and I didn't know it at the time, but some of the resources I were interacting with were open educational resources. And the reason I was super excited when I came across those is because many of them I could download. And, you know, proprietary stuff or copyright stuff, you couldn't really download a lot of it. It was just like, you know, virtually it exists on the internet. So whenever I came across something I could download, I was really excited. So I kept kind of going for those resources, turns out those were OER and I didn't even know it at the time. So I was using them to be successful in school.

[00:06:10] **Jennryn:** That's such an interesting kind of backdoor into OER. I love that story. Though it must have taken so much extra time to do the kind of culling from the internet from different sources and so on and developing your own resources to get through the classes. I can't imagine spending all that extra time plus the homework, plus the classes and everything else with getting a college education.

[00:06:33] **Trudi:** Yeah. It was a huge time investment. It really was. And yeah, I definitely, yeah. I wanted to buy my textbooks. It wasn't that I didn't necessarily want to buy them, but yeah, that was the option open to me.

[00:06:45] **Jennryn:** Okay, so now let's talk about InclusiveAccess.org. What is it and why were you drawn to the effort?

[00:06:53] **Trudi:** So I was drawn to InclusiveAccess.org through once again, a combination of like just my personal feelings about textbook affordability in the United States and my professional background in Public Higher Ed in California. So I'll provide a little more context for like my transition to InclusiveAccess.org cause I think it'll help kinda lay the groundwork for that. So, right outta college, I

was working as a history tutor for a California community college. There was a Dean there. He saw me working and he's like, hey, we're gonna start this open educational resource program on campus. You should interview for it. So I was like, oh, okay, I have no idea what that is, but I'm gonna interview for it. So I interviewed kind of explored a little more, realized it was some of those resources that I'd used in college got super excited and was like, yes, I'd love to do this. So I was an OER specialist for several years created around a hundred open educational textbooks for the state of California with a team of OER specialists. And that's how I kind of got involved in like the open ed space professionally. So from there, I worked with some big open ed organizations like spark and OE global. I came into contact with them and did some work for them and just kinda interacted with them as I learned more about this process. And then I left being an OER specialist and I became an ed tech specialist and an instructional designer still in the California community college system. And it was there, when I was dealing with large campus wide program subscriptions and software subscriptions that I started to hear about inclusive access. Like I started to hear like whimpers of it across the state and schools were considering onboarding it. And then of course, California UC Davis, they were like one of the first major pilots of inclusive access programs. So I started to hear about it. I was digging in, I was trying to do a little bit of research into kind of what this was my school wasn't really considering at the time, but course affordability is a huge topic, as we all know across the United States, material affordability. And so I was just doing little research and that's when I stumbled across InclusiveAccess.org. And I was like, oh my goodness, this is fabulous. And the reason I loved it was because when I looked to onboard new ed tech for my school, or really any, you know, program-wide campus-wide subscription— I always did a lot of like, reviews checking, like, you know, you wanna know the sales rep is gonna give you this pitch about the technology, and they're gonna say, oh, this is a great piece of ed tech, but you really wanna know what the user experience is like, so you're asking your colleagues, you're asking other people that you know of onboard this piece of ed tech, we're just going online to try to figure out how people feel about it. I spent a lot of time on Reddit threads and InclusiveAccess.org was so wonderful because I was like, oh my gosh, I wish I had this for every piece of ed tech that I wanna onboard. I wish I had this website, this community driven initiative that kind of breaks down what is inclusive access? How does it work? And here's what you should consider. If you want to onboard it onto your campus. It was, and it was just laid out very even keel tone, but really student and faculty focused, which is really, should be the purpose of any piece of ed tech, right? It should be student faculty focused. So they were breaking it down, like from a student faculty perspective. So I really appreciated that fast forward a little bit. I found out that there was a hiring process for InclusiveAccess.org, but they needed someone to run the initiative. And I was like, I would love to do that. I would love to dive even deeper into course material affordability.

[00:10:08] **Jennryn:** It's really great to hear the personal passion and the humility that you're bringing to this. I think that's so valuable in something that's meant to be, as you said, user driven. So tell us a little bit more about InclusiveAccess.org. I know it's a wonderful resource for people in the positions that you were in trying to assess, like what piece of ed tech might be valuable or not to their university audiences. Maybe we should back up a little bit, actually. What kind of needs or current gaps do inclusive access programs purport to fill. And then we can talk a little bit more about the actual website.

[00:10:45] **Trudi:** Excellent question. So inclusive access programs or automatic textbook billing programs as we refer to them internally are basically campus wide or program, or it could even be course by course, subscriptions to publisher course materials. And the way that this works is that students either pay a flat fee per credit hour or per course to access these digital first materials. So they're largely digital

print options are available, but generally it's a digitally focused program. And the reason that this is becoming such a huge conversation in higher ed is primarily around course affordability. So inclusive access programs are from publishers and they say, we can get you our same quality content, our digital content for a much cheaper price than like the sticker price of a brand new shrink wrap textbook off of our website. So the number one claim of these programs is course material affordability, big discounts, or they claim big discounts for students. Because that is such an issue right now, the second claim to fame, I would say for these programs, the second biggest one is that first state access to course materials. So we know in the history of the course material conversations and affordability conversations we've had at the state and federal level. The United States for the past 10 years or so, the first has been affordability. Students can't afford their textbooks. The second has been because they can't afford their textbooks. They're not all getting their textbooks at the same time. Some of them are getting their textbook three weeks into the course, some have the first day because of the digital delivery of these textbooks. But because it's digital first content, if students enrolled in these programs. And if they decide not to opt out of these programs, they get that content, they get their digital textbook or course material through the learning management system, the first day of class. So that's probably the second biggest claim to fame that these programs purport to have. I'd say those are the two biggest. There's a couple other things that I could dig into, but those are definitely like the number two things that these programs are claiming to address.

[00:12:38] **Jennryn:** Okay. And so InclusiveAccess.org looks at those claims to fame and some of the challenges associated with the inclusive access deals that are kind of less obvious. So you've given me a snapshot about what inclusive access programs aim to address or purport to address. Tell me a little bit more about InclusiveAccess.org, and how it looks at not just the current gaps that inclusive access programs purport to fill, but also some of the, not so obvious results of these programs.

[00:13:13] **Trudi:** Okay. So I guess an easy way to tackle this or to explain it would be kind of discussing like the number one claim, which is, does inclusive access practically allow students to save money on their course materials. So if you enroll in an inclusive access program as a student, or you are enrolled in an inclusive access program as a student is this actually giving you a little bit of financial liberty? Is this actually allowing you to not pick between food and course materials, as you know, which is a situation that I definitely experienced in undergrad? To be diplomatic, I would have to say it depends. So first there's concerns about the discounts not being significant enough. And I like to think of it more from the perspective of who actually gets a really good deal on these programs, and that could be due to factors outside of sticker price.

[00:14:02] **Trudi:** So an easy example is that let's say institution has onboarded a campus wide inclusive access program, and they're using the popular per credit hour fee. So basically what that means is for campus wide inclusive access programs, all students are enrolled in the program automatically unless they choose to opt out of the program. And usually the credit hour fee is we see generally somewhere from \$20 to \$30 - \$35 per credit hour. So if the student's taking 15 units that translates to about roughly 350 or so dollars for all their course materials for that semester. Now, if I'm a STEM major, And perhaps one of my textbooks is, \$210, which is not unusual at all for those disciplines, inclusive access might just be a good deal for me, especially if for whatever reason I was planning on purchasing brand new materials or I needed to purchase brand new materials because I can only find the current addition that my professor wants in a brand new material, that might be a good deal for me, but if I'm a humanities major and I'll

pick on history a little bit, because I was a history major in college that might not be so great a deal for me because my humanity textbooks, they might be available through the library, which is something I experienced a lot. I might be reading like scholarly articles, also available through the library. Or I might be reading like historical fiction, like from the period, which also might be quite a bit cheaper, like I can maybe get that book for \$5 on Amazon used. So for me, it's maybe not as great of a deal. And for that STEM student, like I said, the deal also depends on how they're planning on accessing their materials. So it's a little bit tricky. So when these programs say that they're saving money for all students, what we're really looking at. Is the word all in that claim, how do these cost savings, how do they break down? How do they actually affect the students? And it's important to note that generally when the campus wide inclusive access program is implemented it really is just that flat fee per credit hour. So there's no real wiggle room there. If it's a campus wide initiative, all students are just charged that flat credit fee, regardless of the discipline that they're in, the major they're pursuing, et cetera.

[00:16:23] **Jennryn:** Yeah that's really helpful to hear those details and to hear the emphasis on all as if there was one kind of universal solution to all of the different needs that learners have as they go through our educational systems. And one of the things that I remember when I was in undergrad was like really needing to resell the books that I bought. Sometimes I wouldn't, as you mentioned, be able to buy the secondhand books and the option to resell them after the semester didn't get that much money, but it was always yeah, it was something that I really relied on. I know even if people don't wanna hold onto their textbooks and reread them after a semester, taking away the chance to sell them back and regain some of the money is important to a lot of students. I recently saw a survey that noted the majority of students would prefer to access hard copies of their textbooks. And I think it was for reselling purposes too.

[00:17:21] **Trudi:** Yeah. I mean, that's a huge consideration with inclusive access, right? Because these programs are very proudly digital first programs largely. And there is that, you know, that digital element which for some students like, like that, and some, as you mentioned, many do prefer the print options and print options are available occasionally in these programs, but usually at an additional cost. So whatever that student is already getting charged to be enrolled in the inclusive access program, they're going to have to pay an additional charge on top to access that print option which, you know, that could be viewed as an access issue and accessibility issue. And then, yeah, exactly. As you said, a lot of students want to have, I think this really is an ownership conversation, right? Because it's like, this was a book that I purchased that I used and I wanna be able to send it back or to resell it and then to get some of that money back, even if it's not very much, but with digital content. It really is much more like a subscription. I've heard it inclusive access programs referred to as Netflix for books. You know, that's not a perfect comparison. But what they're getting at there is that digital rental aspect. When I watch some video on Netflix, I don't own it, the streaming service owns it. And I'm essentially, I'm just renting that movie for the period of time that I'm watching it. It's the same concept of these books. These are digital rentals. So yeah, the ownership conversation here it really is different from the traditional textbook model. .

[00:18:41] **Jennryn:** Yeah, that makes sense. So as an open education advocate, and as someone who is really invested in open educational resources in particular, I'm curious about your perspective about what you mentioned with the digital rental model. Do you think that there might be a viable alternative to these inclusive access efforts and what role might OER play? If any. I realize that largely open educational resources are largely digital, so maybe they're not a viable alternative, but I'm curious to hear from you

about what viable opportunities there might be for students in the future. If inclusive access campaigns don't meet all of their needs right now.

[00:19:30] **Trudi:** Awesome. Yeah. So great question. And I think to fully answer this I'm just gonna back up a little bit and kind of fold in your question about digital resources into a larger conversation concerning online education and it's kind of current and future state in the United States. And once again, this is from my personal experience, right? I've been an ed tech specialist. I've been an instructional designer. And now I'm kinda at this higher level working on like policy initiatives and more statewide and nationwide initiatives. So this is a personal opinion, but these are where I see industry trends heading. So I think it's interesting how, in some aspects, inclusive access limits, students rights as consumers rights to have these different types of options via digital or otherwise at a time when students are on the cusp of having more options and I guess I would call it educational market power than ever before. And I think that's largely because of online education. So I think the way that inclusive access is trying to break into the online education space is as digital content, which is an important first step, right? If you wanna exist in the online. You have to provide your content digitally, but I think it's just one part of the equation. And here's why based on where I see us heading in online education. So I was having a conversation recently on a work trip with several ed tech specialists and designers from across the country. And we were talking about industry 10 trends. And we were talking about something that I got really excited about, which is kind of this idea, of course, assessments will no longer be separate from the course. So basically the integration of assessment into the course itself, as in course, materials will drive mastery, separate assessment will not necessarily be required. And what I mean by that is, as we've seen the evolution of online education in the past 15, 10, 5, even two years, largely because of the pandemic, there's been a lot of skepticism towards online ed that's really starting to go away. It was decreasing quite a bit over the years, but the pandemic really like hastened that because we all shifted to this virtual environment, right? And we put a lot of money and time into online courses. When you shift a lot of higher ed to this digital landscape, you give students a lot more options, with more consumer rights in that space because they don't just have to go to the college near them anymore. They can go to a college anywhere in the country in this online format. So it gives them a lot of power to select classes that work for them. Right now, schools recognize this and they're doing their absolute best to create online education courses and programs that are attractive to students. And this is because they respect student reviews. If a student takes a course and their online course experience is really negative, they're not gonna take that course again. And they're gonna talk about it online. So schools are pouring a lot of money into making, not just the course content of course, up to code and relevant and accurate, but also the course experience. What did the student actually feel like they got a real learning experience out of the online class?

[00:22:39] **Jennryn:** Amazing. I really love what you just said about students as the consumers here as online consumers, I love this idea of having students recognize their own power in this new environment that we find ourselves in given the pandemic. So I'm wondering if you have any other thoughts on what might kind of galvanize students to, to work together or to start to maybe share tips on this new form of, I guess consumerism in education.

[00:23:10] **Trudi:** Absolutely. And I mean to answer the question, I think there's many ways that they could get together and you know, effectively, but they already are. And that's kind of the amazing thing is that especially, and, don't wanna pick on Gen Zs and I also think generations to some extent are not always a good way to look at people because people are a little too complex and unique to be lumped into

generations. But, there is something to being a digital native and as younger students and really, honestly, any student that has taken an online class at this point they talk about their experience online. They do share with other students. I mentioned going on Reddit a lot to figure out if a piece of ed tech was good. I spent a lot of time on Reddit, just reading what students have to say, because it's a platform where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their feelings about many things, including higher ed in their experience in online classes. So I think that there's better, you know, there could potentially be even more effective ways for them to organize. But I think the important thing to acknowledge is that they're very much already doing it. They're very much doing it. They're sharing with their peers because they're trying to help each other out in their education experience. And that's something I even experienced, like, borrowing textbooks from my friends. We pull in on a textbook together, and then we would share it. We'd find a digital copy online, a little bit cheaper or what Amazon rental, whatever. And we would share that but what I'm really excited about is not just student's ability to share with each other, these tips and tricks, so to speak for, how to afford their course materials. But also, as you mentioned, the power that this kind of shift online, ed gives students in this space as consumers. I think for so long students have shared tips and tricks on how to afford their course materials on how to move through online or any kind of class really in higher ed. But I think what this online shift does for students in terms of empowering them is it gives them options. It makes students, it makes institutions actually have to court them in terms of creating online programs that they would actually like to move through. And as students move through these online programs, What we're starting to see, just because of the way online courses are set up is there's less of this separation of like course material and course content. It's all starting to get baked in. And that has a lot to do with trends in instructional design as well. We understand that in an online course, if you build it in such a way where the assessment reinforces the content reinforces the assessment, if it's all there on the page at the same time, students do much better. And the reason I think that's so important in terms of these course material conversations is because I think the future of education is trending online. And I think the future is also trending towards the course itself, being the assessment separate from course materials. So what I kind of mean by that is I'll offer a quick example. So I worked with a faculty member to create a history assignment in an online course called document. And essentially what happened is the professor took two articles from historical period that kind of presented opposing viewpoints of the situation that had happened. And he put them on his learning management system and he asked students to read them and he said, okay, now you're gonna, you're gonna write a summary article comparing these two pieces. You're gonna take a position. So you're gonna side with one of the. And you're gonna argue for that position in your assignment. And that's your assignment. Now, these were just two articles pulled from the library. They were put on the learning management page where the assignment actually was. So they were reading the assignment instructions and they were going right into these articles. And these students were producing this piece of original content at the end for their assessment. That's just integrated course material. There was no separate course material experience in that. That was just, it was all baked in. And I think that's where we see online trending. It's not this like separate concept and I think, oh, I think open educational resources are really uniquely positioned in that space because they've always been digital first. I think digital, I think, depending on how you look at it, digital first can be a really a good, a great boom in this space because it allows you to kind. Create these online course experiences that are integrated, that feel learning objective driven for the student and the instructor that test mastery within the course. And it's not so much about this separate content that we actually need a separate course material. That's connected to the course, but a little disjointed from it. It's this holistic course experience and OER is uniquely poised to thrive in that

environment. And going back to kind of like students as consumers, student, empowering students as having more of a say in options. Now, as we trend to this online environment, I think that there's a space here for institutions and students to really thrive. And where I see that is if the course materials are connected to the course itself. If course mastery is what's the assessment, what's driving assessment, what's driving student success in the course. Students are getting the opportunity to actually create something as they need through the course. Students want workforce skills. They're tired of moving through their collegiate experience and feeling like when they graduate, they don't have something that they can actually bring to the industry that they wanna work. So this kind of focus on. An integrated course experience using materials to create, rather than just separate course materials to like refer to, and then go back to your course. It's very attractive to students. And I think open educational resources have a, really have an edge here because there's this emphasis on creation and there's this emphasis on adapting materials for local context, which works really well in the online environment. So in many ways I actually see inclusive access programs as trying to kind of a little bit sometimes put a round peg in a square hole of like, we're just gonna keep the same model. We're gonna make it digital so that it can be disseminated through the classes. It can be disseminated digitally. It can be disseminated to learning entry system. Okay that's great, you made the content digital, but is it integrated? Is it adapted for local context? Is it a part of the course experience itself? No, it still feels very much like this separate entity and interestingly enough, without even a lot of background, necessarily on course material affordability, discourse, and open educational resources and all these things, students are judging their course experience. And so I think that judgment of end user experience how students feel, what they learned through the course, if they felt it was like, actually, if this online environment actually like added to their learning experience, those are the courses that they're going to recommend. Those are the courses they're gonna talk highly of. Those are the courses they're going to enroll in. And so it's kind of this whole online delivery method as a whole that I see driving really, almost organically, this attempt to find course materials that are more integrated to the environment that actually speak to student learning. As like at large, whether or not you're really involved in the course material, accordingly discourse or OER discourse.

[00:29:55] **Jennryn:** Absolutely. Right now it seems like the opportunity for open educational resources is growing and the kind of compassionate user centered experience that that open education courses can provide is growing. I mean, just person to person. Does this sound right? Is there, are we basically is the open education model kind of David and against the Goliath of inclusive access efforts?

[00:30:27] **Trudi:** Oh, that's such a good question. And you know I don't think so. I consider myself quite a pragmatist. And so, generally when you're dealing with a grassroots higher ed movement, like open educational resources and you're dealing with corporations, right? Large corporations, or rather large industry, really with a long history in the states. It can feel like that. And I have felt like that many times I have felt like that many times. So it's an extremely valid position. It's when I found myself in quite a bit. And yes, I guess I'll say at times it can feel like that, but I have to confess I've actually never been as excited for open educational resources or just open education or just honestly alternatives, like the consideration of alternatives to the traditional course materials, acquisition and use models that we find here in the United States. I've never been more excited about disruption there because of this kind of this trend to online environment which of course can be disenfranchising in other ways like this is a big pie, right? There's lots of, there's lots of elements to it. But I think the reason that I don't think it's quite a David and Goliath just yet, and why I'm actually more hopeful, I think now than I even was pre pandemic is because I think what this trend in online education which is very much, it's very much, I really truly

believe here to stay. And no I don't think it will replace all face to face courses. You know, I don't think this is quite gonna be a Jetsons shift to flying cars, et cetera, in the next like five years. But I think that it is going to become a very large chunk of the higher ed landscape. I think it's going, I think the skepticism about these classes has largely disappeared from a user experience and even from an admin experience or, you know, perspective. I think the conversation we're having now is dissemination versus integration. And that's why I think I have hope. And that's why I think it's different because changing the way you give somebody, the same thing is not the same as creating a better product and a better end user experience. So I think publishers have recognized the industry has recognized the need to shift into this digital landscape because it helps them offer more competitive pricing and it's where students are accessing materials. But I think that there's still that key element missing of integration. How are these resources actually being used? How are these course materials actually improving student learning. And as we move deeper into this online environment, and this is a two sided coin, because we have more access to data, right. Which is, you know, there's a good element to that. But as we do have more access to this data, we have this opportunity and rather I should say, administration has this opportunity to look for ways, statistically, data driven ways to increase success and retention. And as that becomes a larger and larger concern for administration because we're really headed towards an enrollment cliff birth rates in 2008, you know, around the 2008 now financial crisis predict that we're gonna see huge slashes in enrollment, in higher ed in the next five years. And that means that success and retention for schools, keeping their rates up, keeping enrollment high. That's very important. I mean, we have to remember that education as altruistic, as it often is very much it's, you know, it's still a business model in some ways, and administration have to figure out how to keep their institutions afloat and how to offer quality, you know, quality courses and also increase success, retention and enrollment. And I think that's why I'm hopeful because the old kind of like separate from course experience course materials that we see that have been produced by the textbook industry for so long. It's not gonna cut it. It's not going to provide that integrated holistic online education experience. That's going to attract students to courses. That's going to keep students in courses. That's gonna help students be successful in courses we need materials adapted for local context. That's what an online course is: it's materials adapted for local context. And I feel like almost now open educational resources, they're uniquely positioned to shine in a way that I don't think they ever have been positioned before because of something that they've always innately been, which is adaptable, which is one of the number one names of the game in online education.

[00:34:45] **Jennryn:** Wow. Okay. So many things that are now turning in my mind after after hearing your response, I love the distinction between dissemination versus integration. And part of me is just thinking that with the trends in online education, increasing options for students, part of me thinks that is at the crux of open education. Ideally positioning learners in stronger positions of power in their own education and of choice that's ideally what open education does through the resources that are flexible through some of the different practices and so on. So I love the hope that you're bringing to this scenario. I really am kind of drawing from that and appreciate that. So, not to bring us down though, but one of , one of the other things that you'd mentioned was data and how there, you know, there are two sides to this data coin. Can we talk a little bit about data mining in some of the well, in our digital education and in inclusive access programs?

[00:35:52] **Trudi:** Sure. Yes. yes, that's my first answer. It's definitely a concern. It's definitely something that needs to be at the forefront of these types of discussions. Whenever I talk about data mining I first, you know, kind of back up and refer to my ed tech experience and also just like online education and

education as a whole, really whether or not these are online courses is that the rise of data collection for campuses has been massive. This idea of data analytics of using data to, to drive certain outcomes. Higher ed is jumping on this, like every other really aspect of the whole world is really like whether it's a private sector, public sector, we're all because of technology using data to drive certain outcomes or we're seeking to do that. So inclusive access programs are no different, just like any other piece of ed tech software, ed tech program, inclusive access data mines, quite a bit, it collects quite a bit of student data via their programs. The number one way it does, this is through reading analytics. So reading analytics we're talking tracking how many times a student opens a textbook, how long they stay on a page, how often they switch between pages and any kind of interactive components of the textbook, how they're interacting with that, they're collecting all of that data. So there's a couple of concerns and just components here. And they start broad. And I think they kind of come down to like a funnel point. So the first broad concern with any program that collects data in higher ed is security breach. So, and in 2022, we're no stranger to even very reputable, large technology companies being victims of security breaches. And when you work in higher ed, that's a huge concern, right? Cause we have corporate guidelines, corporate protections, all these types of things. So there's just that, you know, anytime you're letting a private corporation access, large amounts of student data, you gotta have questions for those corporations. And for that industry, what's your protocol? How are you protecting student data? What if there's a security breach? What are you gonna do there? So that's just kind of like a broad concern or a broad issue that needs to be addressed holistically. Then we move down into the institutional level concerns. So campus to campus. How does, how, you know, what are our data concerns or what are the data components of these types of programs for an institution a real world example boots on the ground, right? I break down these institutional level concerns into two parts. So first I call it legal literacy and then digital literacy. So the first component legal literacy. Often individuals approving these campus wide contracts for any ed tech program, inclusive access included because inclusive access it's actually quite interesting. It's often treated on a campus like an ed tech subscription. So even though it's course materials, because of the way they're disseminating the content, because it's a, it's either an API, an LTI integration into the learning management system. It's treated like an ed tech contract. And the interesting shift there is that when you're dealing with a course or campuswide integration that falls under the purview of administration of admin, and often the people making these decisions on whether or not to onboard these programs, administration, ed tech specialists, those types of people. They don't always have the legal background to quite understand what they're reading in the contract language. So when you actually get down into the contract, before you sign it, before you decide to onboard this program, it's laid out how the data is gonna be used. It should be explicitly in the contract, but the people making these decisions don't have that legal literacy to really quite understand in that legalese like how the data is always going to be used. So that's the first issue that we have with onboarding these programs is because do you actually have the technical skills necessary to evaluate what data is being collected, why it's being collected, how it's gonna be used and if third parties outside of the corporation that you are personally having this one-on-one relationship with, how are they going to share it with people outside of their organization and what are they gonna do with the data? And I as an ed tech specialist, I was responsible for evaluating, acquiring and maintaining these types of programs on campus, not inclusive access, but you know, just a campus wide integration. And I don't have a legal background and I spent many hours parsing through contracts, asking legal friends and colleagues for advice because I needed to know what was happening with the student data. And I didn't always, because I didn't have that background. Then there's the second component, which is that digital or data literacy. So interestingly enough, a huge selling

point or they treat it as huge selling point for these inclusive access programs is that they actually are like, Hey, we will give you administration. And to a certain extent, faculty access to the data we collect, we'll actually give it to you. And then you can use this data. You can use this data to, you know, for learning analytics and you can track learning analytics and you can make decisions for your courses and your students and your campus based on the data we're giving you. So that sounds great. That initially that sounds like a great point. . But do the people who have access to this data, do administration and faculty have the digital and data literacy to actually understand first what to do with the data. And most importantly, how to interpret the data, because there's no such thing as UN like there's that old saying in tech, there's no such thing as an unbiased algorithm. So collect all this broad data and then you run it through, you know, you create some learning analytic system to try to predict student success and retention, is there a correlation between how often a student accesses their online textbook and their likelihood of dropping the class or not being successful in that course, these are questions that administrators want the answers to and they have the data. And they, you know, so they have the potential to run it, but do they know how to run it? And quite frankly, campuses these days are asking to be a lot of things. They're being asked to be legal experts. They're being asked to create algorithms. Like institutional research departments are trying to, leverage student data effectively. And oftentimes these are individuals who previously, you know, there was in the job description of administrator for a very long time in higher ed. There wasn't something that said you had to have a legal degree and a technical background in order to create an algorithm. But they're being asked to kind of interpret data and interpret contracts in that way. So it's kind of an it's a situation that has the potential to create a lot of. Generate a lot of data, but to what end and is that data going to be used in a meaningful way. And, you know, the worst case scenario is that data going to be used in perhaps even unintentionally a biased way.

[00:42:36] **Jennryn:** Wow. I really appreciate all of the considerations that you're bringing to this. I mean, you're not oversimplifying the complexity of these issues. You're doing a great job, just informing and I'm definitely learning a lot. So I, I did wanna ask you one last question. So I, I realize this is largely a U.S. effort that you're involved in, but do you have any words of advice for our listeners in the U.S. but also around the world regarding things that they can do to improve their access to educational opportunities or really come from that sense of empowerment that kept coming up in our discussion?

[00:43:14] **Trudi:** Wow. I think I'll answer the empowerment aspect first, the reason I am excited about what I see is this legitimizing of the digital learning space and the shift to digital is that there's a lot of opportunity to educate yourself. I'm painting with the broad brush here. I'm not making like revolutionary statements. This is definitely people have pointed this out. Many people, very educated people have pointed this out before that we're kind of in this time of access to information. And that's really incredible. I think I'll just dig into my background really quick to kind of answer this from my personal perspective, which is that I had a very untraditional educational background. My K through 12 experience was not traditional at all. I mentioned I come from a low income family. I was actually pulled out of school for religious reasons. And I was not actually educated. I didn't actually go to school. So from second grade to my senior year of high school I was technically unschooled. I had no formal education at all, and I remember being desperate to learn, I really loved learning. I would take myself to the local library and I would take myself to, you know, the library computers and I would read all the books that I could get my hands on. And I really enjoyed the internet as a kid, because it was a way for me to interact with other people. And it was a way for me to teach myself stuff online. But I remember this deep longing to really want to be educated in a formal sense. I felt that there was something missing. I think there was even a

tiny bit of shame there. Like I wanted to be an educated person. I was very excited whenever I, you know, learned something new. And so I felt like accessing stuff online or going to my library and teaching myself. I felt that it was good, but I still was. I still felt that. Lack of formal education. And I was like, oh I need to get a formal education. I need to cement this. I need to make it real for myself. So I put myself through college. I was fortunate enough to, be in California that has like great community college programs. And then I really benefited from those. But to kind of tie this all back to your original question of like empowerment and like just accessing resources, whether or not you're in the United States kind of making this idea of education as empowering, which I think is what is a lot of it's, that's really, what's behind open educational resources, right? Access, anyone can access knowledge. When I finally went through all of that formal training and I'm so grateful for it. And I came out the other side and I accomplished a lot of what I wanted to I get the chance and opportunity to work in education, which is my whole lifelong dream I'm so just privileged to be here. Honestly, I actually have had a really distinct shift and I wish I could go back and tell myself as a kid who felt that I didn't, I felt embarrassed. Like, that's really the word for it. That, that I didn't have a formal education. I didn't feel educated. I wish I could go back and tell that kid that. Education. Isn't something that somebody in the ivory tower like they don't stamp it. And then that's what makes it education. Education is when you improve yourself, when you create something, when you learn something and you genuinely engage with content in a way to improve the way that you think and interact with the rest of the world, that's education. And I think when you treat it that way, it's extremely, it's empowering because I think because of the, a lot of the ways that education is institutionalized, and of course my experience there is American north American United States. But I think this applies to a lot of the world, right? Education really has this institutionalized aspect like academia, right? The empowerment there is. If you wanna learn, you can be educated. If you wanna create, you can create education. You can create and collaborate in the sharing of knowledge, whether or not you have a formal education or not. And I think that's something that younger people are really contending with. Now, they're looking less and less at the institutional ivory tower and, looking for their approval of what education is, right. They're forging their own path. They're finding their own way to be educated. And I think that as we break down some of these ivory tower fables, that education is behind a paywall, that education is behind a locked door. There is this general empowerment that can be had from that globally. And I think we've recognized that in the open education movement, I think we'll recognize that in the shift to online learning a little bit. And I think if we keep heading in this direction, Adapting to local context of looking to our surroundings to educate ourselves and not just saying that it's, you know, it's gotta be some person in Washington or some person far away from us that has decided what constitutes is learning. I think that's a trend I see globally. And of course it's been happening for the past, you know, long before I came to this movement. But I think these shifts can drive that shift even further.

[00:47:55] **Jennryn:** I love it. What a great note to end on, and also first thank you for sharing your personal experience. I mean, that takes a lot of vulnerability to to talk more about your own personal past. In light of, well, okay. Let me start again. First. I'm really, I'm touched that you were willing to be vulnerable and share more about your experience. And I can see how clearly your experience has led to this work and your passion in this work and opening possibilities and new opportunities and education for students and learners around the world. Well, and particularly in the U.S., but I would say globally I also, I really wanna thank you for the nuance that you brought to this conversation. I learned a lot and I really appreciate it.

[00:48:42] **Trudi:** Thank you so much, Jennryn. And thank you. I always say it's only really possible to be vulnerable when somebody cultivates a space in which that's possible. Right. So it's like the greenhouse effect, like the conditions have to be right to be vulnerable. So I just like really appreciate you and everyone who makes this podcast possible? because you know, the whole process of like coming here and talking about this, I felt very comfortable. And I just appreciate your guys' work so, so much. So honestly I'm very happy to be here. I feel very privileged and thank you so much for this opportunity.

[00:49:11] **Jennryn:** Thank you too.