

Ben: Welcome to the UP Tech Talk Podcast. Coming to you from the academic multi-media studio on the University of Portland campus. Produced by: Academic Technology services.

Ben: Welcome to another episode of the UP Tech Talk Podcast. This is Ben Khan, I'm the academic tech specialist and trainer at the University of Portland. I am joined by my co-host Maria Herb.

Maria: Hey Ben.

Ben: Hey Maria. Today we're happy to have with us in the studio Dr. Randy Heatherington who is joining us here from our school of education here at UP. Thanks for joining us Randy.

Randy: Hey! I'm glad to be here.

Ben: So yeah, today we're gonna talk about sort of the way that technology is transforming the landscape of education from your perspective as someone that has been in a leadership position through some of these changes, and so we kind of wanted to pick your brain about what it's like to be a teacher that's going through a time of technological change.

Randy: Sure! Yeah. Teacher and administrator. 32 years in that world.

Ben: That's right. I found out about that on twitter, from one of your posts.

Randy: Yes I had to become a twitter member. Great PD source. Once I found out about your tech talks, now I enjoy them myself. Usually at a café somewhere, it's always nice with a cup of coffee.

Ben: Yeah absolutely. I think podcasts and technology and coffee all kind of go hand in hand.

So did we have a specific area we wanted to talk about?

Maria: Well, I think I'd like to hear about some of the changes that you saw in the school system when you were working with teachers and trying to bridge the gap between where they started and where they needed to end up in terms of using technology.

Randy: Sure. That's a great place to start because the central elements of bridging any kind of change like that, especially with technology, were the same back in the 80's if I dare go back that far, and they're the same now in a lot of ways in terms of what is necessary to make a successful transition. When we look back into the 80's when primarily technology was used for demographics, for office systems, for all of those things that really didn't involve students. There was some document creation, there was some

reproduction, some transmission of documents and all of those things. All relatively low-tech and all very office management purpose.

But then there was what I'll call "the first change" that really started to hit as we automated things like our school libraries. And where you used to have to spend hours in card catalogs and with little slips of paper and wandering aimlessly through stacks, you now could do those Boolean searches, those smart searches that I know our staff here at the Clark Library at UP spend a great deal of time with our students to this day on not only how to search a database and how to find relevant sources, but how to do it well. And that really became the mantra of those teachers who were not necessarily tech-savvy, but tech-willing. And people who were willing to take a risk and knew that by pressing a button you weren't going to blow anything up and nothing was going to break and things were going to be okay. I think that was kind of that first change on any school staff, and perhaps any university staff in the day as well.

You had that range of people who would consider them, and I'll use your term, the Luddites at one end versus the folks that I frankly call the mustangs; the people that you could open the doors and let them run, and they'll run, and they'll take things to levels you had never anticipated before. And that happened back then with those library issues. And the smart administrator and the smart teacher would seek to build relationships with those who were onlookers and who were interested in what you were doing, but didn't have the confidence, the self-efficacy that they too could do it. That, I think, is the essence of any change and navigating through it, is you have to build relationships not just with the mustangs, but with the workhorses and even the Luddites. And if you build relationships with everybody, then you can actually move the entire school forward, or the entire campus forward as the case may be. But if you don't have those relationships, then you're gonna have people dragging their heels, you're gonna have people refusing to change, and then it happens in little pockets over here and over here, and all of the students don't get the benefits.

So, that was the first change and it certainly lead to some other changes and for administrators, the issue started to emerge. As technology became a little bit more prolific, how do we get it? Well, technology costs money, and back in the day it cost a lot of money. It wasn't quite as accessible from a price vantage point as some of it is now, so those whole cost-benefit analysis things came in. Do you want more poster paper, more art paper, more paints, or two more computers for your lab that only has 15 and your average class size is 30, and do we have kids continuing to share? Where does the money go? Those became the decisions of administrators back in just before the year 2000. Most of their decisions were just around cost-benefit. How do we get this stuff so that the kids can use it to learn?

Then came probably the biggest issue when the web came into play, and I don't know if you, Maria, remember back in the old days when we had dial-up, I certainly do. I remember those sounds, those pings and that horrible gaspy thing that happened as you were connecting, or hoping to connect. [crosstalk 00:06:12]

But that really became problematic in a lot of communities. Not only for teachers and administrators, but for kids because some had it, some didn't have it. Some had access, and some didn't. I think that problem persists today, and I think that with the rate at which technology changes. There are those who can afford to be on the leading or perhaps the bleeding edge of things and have all of that timely tech. The latest phone, the latest this, the latest that. Well, back when tach was first emerging that was true too. So you had to be very careful, and that takes us again back to relationships. How do you bring those kids who do not have access to it at home, who maybe come from homes where the parents are scared of technology or think that technology is going to lead down a very bad path in some way, shape or form. How do you help those kids to be a part of this change and to feel like they are moving forward too. And that's about getting to know each child and what their needs are. What do they need to do to feel competent. And that, I think, is probably one of the key issues.

Ben: I think that's even something that persists at the higher level, even out of private institutions like we're at today. Obviously to a much lesser degree, but I know there are students who don't necessarily have a smartphone or don't necessarily have good high-speed access at home. Maybe they're just relying entirely on their smartphone, if they do have one, for internet access. So I do think that's something that's important for our faculty that are looking to really jump onboard with technology and hit the ground running. Just take the pulse of your students and make sure that everyone is at that level that you are expecting them to be at.

And I think it's actually another thing, on a related note, that I've had some conversations with faculty who've been a little surprised that not all their students are necessarily as tech-savvy as they would think that they are. They're comfortable using technology, they're around it all the time, but they use it for things like social-networking and e-mail and google. It isn't that they're interested in not necessarily using it to write a research paper or something like that.

Maria: Yeah. There are all kinds of assumptions made about millennials and this is definitely one of them; that they all are tech-savvy and they all have the latest and they all want to use technology with everything. That's just not entirely true, so like Ben was saying, it's so important to really find out where your students are with that. And then you can kind of base assignments and projects and things around some accurate information.

Ben: Exactly. And it's not to shy away from using technology, but you might want to know that you might have to lose some scaffolding or some support.

Randy: I think you've hit the keyword there. It's this provision of supports. Because you're going to have people all along that continue, some by choice. I mean some will choose not to want to make technology as big a part of their life as others may.

Maria: Yeah.

Randy: And that's fine. The folks who do it by choice will also then choose to find other ways to accomplish their goals. But it's the ones who, not by choice, but by financial situations,

by life circumstance, whatever it happens to be, who don't have those skills as Maria said, and who see all the students around them appear to have them, probably all don't, but appear to have them. And they feel "well I don't have it."

And I think the environment that UP is creating, and I know that was from my first day here. People couldn't wait to make me aware of "oh, well if you need some support with this, if you need to learn how to use this go here, if you need to learn how to do voice-thread with your courses [inaudible 00:09:58], go over and see Ben. He'll teach you how to do the voice-thread piece." All of those supports, interestingly enough, and I was new on campus, were made aware to me. And I've sat in on a couple of the tours around campus they have for the potential new students. I'm maybe a little old to be a new student I guess, but maybe they thought I was a dad. But I just wanted to listen to how the guys spoke to the incoming new students so I knew what message they were receiving so I as a faculty member, that when I have them in one of my classes, can have a little better idea of where the students are coming from and the kind of questions that their families are asking in that non-threatening, no-risk tour-guide scenario as opposed to in front of the prof who's asking you "Prepare this Prezi presentation or this PowerPoint presentation ..."

Now I'm teaching, one of the biggest pressures on our students and our pre-service teachers is they have to prepare an NTPA standard video that has to be uploaded and sent off for evaluation for them to get their license. That's a lot of pressure on a media skill and on a tech skill that they may not necessarily have. But it has to be done if they want to be licensed, and low and behold, in the Clark Library you go upstairs and you go to [inaudible 00:11:14] and all of his good, fine folks in the tech center there and they can show you not only how to do it, what equipment to use, what are your options, and they make it so that you don't feel bad asking. And they build a relationship with you first. The first thing that he says in his introduction to the students is "I'm here to help you. Come and ask anytime. No question is too small." And he starts every session that I've attended with that and he builds a relationship with the students first, provides the supports that you talked about so that we can try to get all of our students as close as possible to where they are.

Because out there right now, you look at the issues. And I don't know if my fellow faculty members are experiencing it here, they may be. But especially with the cell phone piece, with the handheld piece. Out in the schools it's the "bring your own device" initiative, born largely of financial need, but also of opportunity and students are most familiar with their own device. Unfortunately the teachers are not always as familiar with all of their devices as we'd like them to be, but they're familiar.

And as long as that comes with some support for the teachers on how to manage students with devices in a way that provides opportunities to increase learning, but does not provide opportunities to do other things that might be perceived as less desirable. Is that a light way to put it? So, that part, I think, is the big thing because right now, especially on the collaboration front, if you look at what the students today can do compared to, certainly, when I was in school, and the two of you are much younger than I, so perhaps you've had these opportunities, but to be able to have a discussion with

people in Australia, people in Japan, students in South America, and to have those discussions in real time with other real people. To collaborate on a project together so we're doing weather analysis and we're doing it in two different countries in two different hemispheres and we're doing it real time.

Ben: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Randy: That was unheard of not that long ago. And now technology has made that possible now through google classroom or any of the other collab sites or Moodle, as we use it here. And I don't even know all the ways to use Moodle, Ben, I'll be coming to that workshop I'm just saying.

Ben: We need it.

Randy: But we have these forums now, we have these programs and applications that allow us to collaborate with people we may never have met in our life. And I think that once teachers can wrap their heads around it the students have no problem. They go "Oh yeah. I'm talking to my friend Jose down from Spain. I'm talking to Jack down in Australia." They have no problems handling that.

And then you know that whole concept of living in a global world is now starting to be something they're growing up with. It's our teaching folk who look at this as "Oh. How would I ever organize that? How would I ever manage that?" They could do it. They just need someone in the school, someone at the university, like yourselves, who will help support them through those first steps until they experience those first bits of success and then the technology all of a sudden isn't so scary.

Ben: Right.

Randy: And then what they start to see is opportunities for kids. And nothing inspires a teacher, faculty member, anybody who's in a teaching role; nothing inspires them more than seeing opportunities for kids and them being able to make that happen.

Ben: Yeah. I'm so glad you kind of framed the whole conversation in terms of developing relationships. Because really, I think that's the key to unlocking any tool that seems unapproachable or seems scary. And, you know, most of what technology is designed to do, like information communication technology, it's there in the name. It's there to help you build relationships with people that you couldn't have previously ever done or you could do that a lot more easily or you can do it in real time or you can do it asynchronously. So it's not about replacing the in-person relationships, but the people in your community who can help you either find ways to use that technology or help you learn how to use it or you can then give new learning opportunities too. It's about finding a new way to make relationships.

Randy: Absolutely. The interesting thing that is coming up, and you must come across it in some of the work you do, you and Maria, both of you here at UP. One of the bigger questions now, again back in the 90's and into the 2000's, it was just about access, it was just

about speed and it was all so new and emerging so quickly, people were just trying to wrap their head around it. But now we're getting into some of those deeper moral and ethical questions around technology, you know. And beyond the health-related screen time issues. Now people are starting to talk about "Well, what are you looking at when you're on that site? What are you actually being exposed to? Who's ideas are coming at you and is that okay? And when you make the choice to go to this website, did you realize you are also making the choice to do this, and do this at the same time?" And so much of that, and even the advertising on just about any site now is becoming pretty outrageous. I'm getting a lot faster at clicking the little "x" up in the top right-hand corner, really really quick

Ben: Yeah, and I think it's important for people to be thinking about what those kinds of issues just relating to this entirely new medium, that has really gone worldwide in a relatively short amount of time, so there's all sorts of issues like you were saying about privacy or around commercialization and resources that people without an education can look at to help them make an informed decision about which products they're using and how those are being commercialized or not commercialized. Or who's the product or who's not the product.

Maria: Yeah.

Ben: But then of course there's also all sorts of issues around privacy and identity, like what is your identity when you go online? You can make a whole new identity. I can take your picture, make a twitter profile, say "Hi, I'm Dr. Harry Smith and I have a degree from this school." And then see people start listening to me and what I have to say and see credentials that I haven't necessarily earned. So there's all sorts of interesting issues.

Randy: Yeah. And you hit on a really important point there too, especially in our public schools right here in Portland and really around the world. You don't know who's on the other end of that device, and we look at some of the issues right now about cyber-bullying and sexting and all of those things that are happening. Yes, you may be able to determine which device it came from, but how do you determine whose thumbs were typing the words. Whose hands was the device in when that was happening. Who's doing those things now. That becomes an issue in schools for the principals and vice-principals out there. They deal with this on a daily basis because kids are coming and saying "This person called me and they've got copies of tweets." Or now we've got the sites that disappear, or the kids think they disappear after 15 seconds. What they don't realize is anybody with any tech-savvy can make those things reappear in a heartbeat and all of a sudden they're responsible for the things that they say and do online and this comes as a huge shock to them because they thought "The program told me it's gone after 10 seconds, you're okay." But, not so much. Every keystroke is recorded by somebody, somewhere, doing something.

And it's really marshaled in a whole new generation of parents too. Back in the day, Ben I would assume you had a very haloed school career and you were never in trouble, but there were days if you did get in trouble at school you might have even been able to,

through crafty conversation and other means make it so that home never found out about your day at school, or at least not immediately.

Ben: It's about getting home and erasing that answering machine.

Randy: Yes. In a heartbeat. But now, with the whole thing of cell phones where anybody is reachable anywhere, anytime, not only does that work for the school perhaps calling your mom or dad at work, but it also works the other way, and often, principals get phone calls from very angry parents about why did that principal allow their students - I heard one the other day - a running shoe to be thrown into a urinal and somebody was using the urinal at the time. How could the principal have let that happen? Well, as you can imagine, the principal knew nothing about it. That was news to him. The student had just hopped onto their cell phone and dialed their parents and told them "This is happening to me, and the school's not doing anything about it." And the school didn't even know yet.

Well, after a little bit of digging and after the principal had to try to parlay that, he found out that, well, actually, the student whose shoe was in the urinal came about through a whole series of events that he had caused. But the parent turned around and said "Well that's your fault for allowing cell phones at school."

Maria: ... Oh wow.

Randy: So, you know, that's what I mean about those ethical and moral dilemmas right now and they're starting to occupy a great deal of time for our folks not only in schools, but I know here on campus when we're dealing with those things that tidal nine and some of those sensitive issues there. These cell phones and their ability to gather a large group of people in seconds.

Ben: Right.

Randy: Back in the old day if there was a fight happening at school, people had to get out during class, let people know when it was scheduled usually two days before so you could make sure that everybody could come up with an excuse to be there. Now it's texted and everybody knows it's happening in 30 seconds and they go at the next break. Because everybody's got it and the only person who's not amazingly on that text stream is the principal. Unless of course they've got great hallway cameras and they know that the crowd's moving in a real hurry in one direction.

Maria: They probably do have good hallway cameras.

Randy: So it's those issues. And getting back to where Maria kind of started this whole conversation is, that change, whether it's for the principals in schools, teachers in schools, students on campus, faculty members, hopefully in all of this people don't lose that if you build strong relationships, trust-based relationships with the people. They know you're there to help them, they know you genuinely want to support them in whatever you're doing, then you can work your way, frankly, through any change.

Technology just happens to be one that's moving very fast and is a part of our daily lives both here at UP and in schools and in households. To me, the relationship piece is huge, and if we can somehow as a society manage the inequity, you know the haves and the have-nots, so that not everyone will have the same things ... there's always going to be people who have flashier things and bigger things, etc. But if there's some minimal level of access, some minimal level where people can all do online banking or can all access their public library so that when we have the snowpocalypse in Portland again and you can't actually walk to your library, you can still check your library's database to see if they have your book and even order it so that it's in when the snowpocalypse disappears. So if we can manage the inequity, whether it's on campus or off, I think that would be good.

Ben: Write your congressmen, folks! Well, it's been a great conversation. Randy I want to thank you for walking across campus today. Not in the snow today ...

Maria: Right.

Ben: ... But it's a little windy and chilly, so thank you for coming over

Randy: My pleasure, Ben. As long as you keep up the podcasts, I'll keep following you on twitter so I'll know when the next best thing, especially the next Moodle class, I'll be attending that.

Maria: Thank you so much for listening to our podcast, we really appreciate that.

Ben: All right. So listeners, thanks for joining us again. And if you want to be like Dr. Heatherington you can follow us on twitter @UPTechTalk. Find out about all the fun stuff that we get up to here at ATS. And until then, we'll catch you next time. Thanks

Ben: Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP Tech Talk Podcast. We post new episodes on Friday mornings. If you want to hear more, please subscribe through iTunes or check out the Tech Talk Blog at techtalk.up.edu