

hello learning nerds and welcome on in to the nerdiest podcast you're going to hear today my name is Dr Luke Hobson I'm

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your host of this show I am a senior instructional designer and program manager I'm an author instructor blogger

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and podcaster and the founder of instructional design Institute my passion and my purpose is instructional

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design and I love to be able to share with you more experiences about instructional design in general and to

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help you along your own instructional design Journeys whether you are a newbie or you're a veteran and you've been

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doing this for years all we're welcomed on into this show and of course you can find all my information over at Dr Luke

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hobson.com and before I introduce today's guest I have an announcement I have been working on something behind

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the scenes now for months and I am finally ready to unveil it and that is that I have completely revised and

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revamped instructional design Institute I have taken everything I've learned about over the years and put it back

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over into the Institute to really make it brand new and to make sure that I'm doing the very best to possibly serve

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you what does this look like now well it is a seven week long instructional design boot camp we are going to be

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covering everything from Andra gauge backward design learning strategies Universal Design for Learning and

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evaluating your courses your trainings and your program's Effectiveness and of course along the way you are going to be

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building and designing your own learning experience you're going to have a course by the end of this because of course I

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want you to have hands-on experience and be able to have an artifact by the end so if you want to be able to incorporate

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that into a portfolio and of course I can help walk you through how to make one as well too well that's all going to

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be included inside of there this is going to be a cohort it's going to be Community focused to make sure but you

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do have that type of peer-to-peer relationship that support system that structure to help to guide you along the

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way you're going to be getting peer feedback on your assignments as well as two as that as your instructor I'm also

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going to be giving you feedback as well on top of all of that I'll be sending you a free copy of my ebook what I wish

2:02

I knew before becoming an instructional designer for you to have that guide too now this is definitely for more of the

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educational Focus uh that is my jam as you know me higher education is certainly in my blood that is my sweet

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spot of course for those and other different types of sectors to want to be able to take this you certainly can but

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no but I definitely focus more on the learning nerd side I do not focus on the

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e-learning the authoring tools side of a house just want to make sure that you are aware about that you can find more

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information go down below and you can find the website inside of a show notes you're also going to see an application

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form too and I did that on purpose because I want to learn more about you your goals and your expectations so that

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way I know how to help you as your instructor so go down below apply today the next run starts on May 1st so you

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still have plenty of time to be able to apply I'll be in touch about everything and I cannot wait to nerd out with you

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over seven weeks now without all that being said let me introduce today's guest Dr Tom Tobin Tom is a founding

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member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for teaching learning and mentoring he's also a very

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accomplished author he has written many books and he is a strong advocate for the Universal Design for Learning

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Community I've actually known Tom for years which is this is so strange to say but this is the first time I've actually

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talked to him but I've been following his Twitter account I've been following his LinkedIn post he's an extremely

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insightful and knowledgeable human being also an extremely kind human being founded out on the Today's Show which is

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going to be something that you're going to clearly hear as we go into our conversation but I invited Tom because

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I've been hearing from many of you about how you've been struggling with burnout and trying to be able to figure out what

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steps to take next as far as through a transitioning and perhaps you are already working within Academia and

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you're trying to be able to figure out well what other paths and Alternatives can I potentially take or if you're

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looking outside of Academia how do my academic skills apply into the corporate

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space or something along those lines well with all of those questions I

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thought who better to talk to than Tom because him and his colleagues literally wrote a book on this very subject so Tom

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Katie Linder and Kevin Kelly wrote a book called going alt act a guide for alternative academic careers this book

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actually came out during the pandemic like right at the start of the pandemic and because of that I don't think it

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received as much attention as it really should have it's an excellent book it goes into not just how to transition but

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by being able to identify your skills and where they're going to fit into different types of positions and

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different types of roles and some of them really might not be aware about we also talk to inside of this conversation

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about how to be able to think more about yourself as far as being able to do a

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side hustle whether that's going to be for teaching uh speaking developing courses you know whatever it is thinking

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more about how you can actually make that extra form of income we talk about that and we also talk more about you

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building a brand a portfolio and why that is going to become so valuable so

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if all of that said this conversation is really going to help you out if you are thinking about what is your next move

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within your career and planning things out from next year five years from now 10 years from now this book can

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absolutely help you and this conversation is going to try to be able to summarize uh all these different chapters and all of these different

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topics so I'm not going to waste any more time here is the one and the only Dr Tom Tobin Tom welcome to the podcast

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oh thank you very much Luke for having me on the show glad to talk with you today absolutely absolutely and Tom I

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cannot wait to talk more about with you and for all of your work and we're going to get into all that fantastic good

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stuff but before we go any further can you just please introduce yourself to the audience tell us more a little bit

6:00

about who you are and what is that you do it's your thing my name is Tom Tobin I'm a founding member of the center for

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teaching learning and mentoring at the University of Wisconsin-Madison now beyond my day job I'm a scholar author

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and speaker on issues of quality and Technology mediated education things like copyright evaluation of teaching

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practice academic Integrity accessibility Universal Design for Learning basically the stuff that scares

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the heck out of instructors and Deans yeah pretty much pretty much and this

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was so crazy is that Tom like guys we were actually talking about this before the podcast I have known you for forever

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what feels like at least forever and somehow we have never talked before but I have been following you on Twitter and

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on LinkedIn for like the longest time and somehow we we never actually came across but then one of the things that

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uh completely I was just like oh my gosh that moment did happen is that I attended Dr shiwa Brazil's dissertation

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and then you were there and you were speaking and I was like I I have to talk with Tom

7:01

have to say hi and introduce myself so I'm so glad we're finally able to come together after all this time oh

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absolutely and likewise I've known about you and your work for a long time you

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and I have moved in parallel circles you know our Focus was different and diverse

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enough that we connected with very different groups of people you and I do two things the same I think one of them

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is we're both at a point in our work in our career and our advocacy where it's

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not about us anymore and we're looking for who are the newer voices in the field that we can champion and learn

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from and listen to and Dr Shiva Brazil in Montana was one of those voices you

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know I was glad to work on her dissertation as an informal advisor and

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then come to support her work so I'm I love that you're a fellow Silo buster

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absolutely and I actually she needs to come on the show she is a brilliant amazing person so we got to bring her on

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the show as well too but putting that all aside Tom I'm actually curious to learn more about your journey because I

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really started to know you as far as her being like the udl expert in my mind that's what I always saw you talk about

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and do and preach about but how did you actually get to where you are today because I know you've accomplished quite

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a bit and it's not just only udl you do a whole bunch so how did you get to where you are today the short version of the story is that I

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started my career wanting to be an English professor my first two books are all about 19th

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century British literature and art history and only about six people have ever read both of those books my whole

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career though has been as a learning developer and theorists so you can say that I've really lived out the

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alternative academic career path I was the one of those fortunate crazy people

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who got my high school diploma and then four years later I had an undergraduate

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degree in literature and also a teaching Certification did my student teaching in K-12

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two years after that had a master's degree in literature four years after that PhD in British literature and art

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history I was a 28 year old kid who didn't really know how to do my laundry all

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that well but I had a doctorate along the way while I was working on my

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PhD I got a job at a two-year College in Western Pennsylvania this was 1997. they hired me to help

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them create their very first online courses now why would you bring a

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literature person in to do that well I was a bibliographer and I was learning HTML teaching it to myself in order to

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do my bibliographic work and create content for it and the internet which

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was brand new-ish at the time was a really handy tool it went beyond just

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database management so they hire me on I help them to adopt

10:01

Blackboard version one you instructional design nerds I was one of the ogs for

10:08

Learning Management Systems I became a sis admin I taught you know

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sort of taught myself the the role as we went along but what really changed my career path

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his name was Marty Marty was an instructor in the business

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division at our two-year College he came to me and he said you know I think this online stuff is crud I don't

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think it's going to be effective I think face to face is the only way people can learn but I want to have a job in 10

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years so would you teach me how to teach online now Marty's honesty was refreshing that

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was just the sort of the way he approached the world what you don't know yet about Marty is that he had gone

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blind in his 40s due to undiagnosed and so untreated

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diabetes what that meant was and I'll put air quotes here for the listeners who aren't

11:03

watching the the video here he didn't know how to quote be a blind person so

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no touch typing no Braille no getting around with a cane none of that he had

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been a sighted person and then he went blind so you know I'm a new person in my field

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I say yeah sure I'll help you no problem and then I closed the door he leaves I think

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look to the literature the literature will save you I do a literature and there is no literature

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by good luck I got connected to Norm Coombs c-o-o-m-b-s he was a professor at

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Rochester Institute of Technology he'd been blind since birth and he was a nationwide advocate for the rights of

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instructors with disability barriers in the environment I got connected with Norm I explained

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what I wanted to do and Norm gave me some good advice but it was essentially good luck kid because not many people

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were doing faculty support for faculty whose environments didn't fit their

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ability profiles now cut to the end of the story right

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Marty had been a sighted person so we got him to think about the TV screen and

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what what buttons are where in Blackboard and he basically memorized Blackboard version one

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we got graduate students from a local University on grants to come in and be Marty's eyes and ears so when he taught

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his intro Business course and students would post things in a discussion forum or turn in work via a Dropbox the

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students would read out graduate students would read out what Marty's freshman Learners would say and Marty

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would say oh yeah put this feedback here and respond this way and The Graduate students would type it out so much more

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effective actually than Jaws which was just being developed at that point and that worked splendidly for three

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semesters Marty was a successful online instructor until I had a vice president

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standing in my office doorway telling me we've got to shut Marty down

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and I said why hey we actually did it and the vice president said do you

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realize we're violating FERPA privacy laws like seven different ways here oh yeah

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so that story about Marty though that failure

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caused me to pause and think if it was this challenging to help one person with

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one class who else is out there whom we're not serving well or maybe not serving at all

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and I started to think about people with work schedules that didn't allow them to

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come to campus family and caregiving needs military service folks who just lived far away from campus there were

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all these barriers that were out there and I thought we can do better with the service that we're doing for

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folks and you know along the way I kept learning myself after that stint with a

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two-year College I ended up going into industry I worked for seven years in the Learning and Development arm of Blue

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Cross and Blue Shield the health insurance industry and uh that Blue Cross Blue Shield story

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was great right so my colleagues at Blue Cross said oh you have a PhD that's nice can you do project management

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and you know for for those of you counting along at home I've got the Masters and PhD in English literature

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I've got the master's degree in information science I went back and got a professional project management certification because the folks at Blue

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Cross said you needed these skills I got a master online teacher certification the quality matters reviewer

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certification the professional in accessibility core competencies certification and I just completed last

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year the academic Leadership Academy from Penn State so I tell my nieces and nephews I'm in 44th grade

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and I never really stopped being a learner and I've also sat in just about every

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spot you can think of in higher education and in Industry so since the Advent of online courses in higher ed in

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the late 1990s my work is focused on using technology to extend the reach of

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higher education beyond our traditional audiences I advocate for the educational rights of people with disabilities

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people from disadvantaged backgrounds and my education practice books focus on

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practical ways that we can address barriers for learning so I worked with

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Annie Taylor from Penn State and Gene mandernak from Grand Canyon University on evaluating online teaching

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implementing best practices that came out in 2015 we saw that there were a lot of folks who

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knew how to observe and assess the design of online courses your

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instructional design audience you know this very well we've got the quality matters rubric we've got the UC Chico

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rubric lots of different things but there really wasn't any clear guidance on how to observe and assess the

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teaching behaviors that people exhibited when they were in traditional asynchronous online environments so we

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wrote the book and the same thing with the I wrote a comic book called the copyright ninja because lots of people

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don't understand the basics of copyright and I don't want to turn people into miniature lawyers so that was a lot of

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fun finding the artists and I have to credit Mark nice k-n-e-e-c-e from the Savannah College of
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Art and Design he wrote a wonderful book called How to script for comic books and I devoured
that in a couple of days and

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the end result of the the whole process was publishing a comic book which was kind of fun

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and then things like like Universal Design for Learning or udl when Kirsten

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bealing and I wrote reach everyone teach everyone udl in higher education it was because

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Universal Design for Learning in the K-12 environment had a concise definition and years of data
behind it

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and when we were thinking about that book in 2016 and 17 it was just catching

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on in higher education it's all over the place now and I feel kind of like the Pied Piper in that
regard there's a

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bunch of people doing good work on udl Research right now and we're at the point where we're
starting to get those

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evidence-based practices in fact that's the the next book that I'm writing is called udl at scale
and it's advice for

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presidents provosts Boards of Trustees Deans how do you do this at an

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Institutional level rather than an individual level but the book that we're talking about today is is
going alt ack a guide to

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Alternative academic careers because every single time I said this is what

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I'm going to do with my life it didn't happen that way and those alternative choices that were
available to me I had

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to really seek them out and be proactive and go out and try and uh you know before all of that
kind

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of stuff happened like for example I had an opportunity in 2018 to go to Budapest

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Hungary on a Fulbright scholar Grant and help yacht foshlorand University there

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develop its first faculty development program I gave workshops and training to 12 other colleges and universities and a

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couple military units in Hungary about training and learning in the field when

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people are away from the formal places and spaces that we've built as higher education so a lot of that instructional

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design kind of of focus I've been an ID with a formal title of instructional

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designer and and that all folds in to the the

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sort of knowing a lot about a lot of things and hearing good ideas from

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people in various fields and thinking how can I apply that over there how can I cross these streams

19:01

I I was honored you know if you the the last piece of the background I'm honored

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that I'm in a position to be able to listen to a lot of folks I serve on an editorial board on Insight a journal of

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scholarly teaching on the editorial board of the online Journal of distance learning Administration and that's been

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a fun ride I got named to edtech Magazine's 2020 dean's list of

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educational technology influencers in 2022 I received the Wagner award for

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leadership and distance learning and I just was recently named by eduflow as one of the world's top 100 learning

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influencers along with a certain Dr Luke Hobson who's also on that list so

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congratulations to you as well never heard of them no idea yes I know that's

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awesome Tom that is awesome but thank you for sharing all those stories and that's incredible I'm going to be on the lookout by the way for your udl

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institution level book that's really it's probably a 2024 release 24. that's super interesting though

I

20:00

can't wait to read that also do you teach a course on networking by the way because from all those stories you must

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be a networking wizard at this point in time and making those relationships connecting with people because that was a lot of what you've done well also uh

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some if you're listening to the podcast on audio you can't see I'm pointing to all the gray hair that's on top of my

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head all of this is earned right so what I've just described was 30 plus years of

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a conversation that's been happening for a very long time so if if that had

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happened overnight I'd probably be asleep right now so that's that's a long long time and uh

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the the one thing that I tell everybody and I'll say this to all of your guests and listeners is I've got 20 minutes for

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anybody if you're a graduate student just starting out if you're the president of a university if you're

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somebody I meet on the street let's talk for 20 minutes I'd love to hear your story find out what's what makes you

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tick what's important to you and if there's a way that I can help you push forward on things that are meaningful

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for you I'll I'll give it my best shot so I I've got 20 minutes for anybody so that's that's the very shortest possible

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course in networking that you can take right there yeah there you go very generous of you you her Tom he just said

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blow up his email all of you just fired up right now but no that's awesome Tom that's awesome so let's talk about

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really why you're here today because you did actually mention it about your book going alt act and you wrote this with

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your colleagues Katie Linder and with Kevin Kelly and this book to me sounded so interesting because it does talk

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about alternative past that someone within the Academia world can actually go and pursue and when I saw your

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posting about this on LinkedIn I must have read my 29th post from other people describing burnout and frustration and

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been trying to be able to figure out what do you do where do you exactly do you go and I know a thing or two about a

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thing or two because I have worked in Academia for years so I have been a lab assistant and instructor I've been an

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academic advisor an instructor a program manager so I've dabbled in a few different areas but definitely most

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people I don't think are as well versed about what you can actually do from different types of uh paths and

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Alternatives so before we go into can you tell us more about your inspiration behind why you wanted to write the book

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yeah this was a fun one because if you go to the academic self-help shelf in

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the bookstore there's dozens of these books you know it talks about you know how to

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and with titles like surviving the PHD grind or

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or what to do when your field has dried up and they're they're kind of these

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I don't know apocalyptic getting over the emotional drain of not being able to

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actually follow the path that you thought you were going to follow we wanted to write a book that was very

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different in tone that was the experiences that you have in getting a

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postgraduate degree can serve you well you can while you're

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working on your education set yourself up to go into a number of different kinds of paths either in Academia but

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not on the instructor track or adjacent to Academia where you're using academic

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skills in other fields it was weird because I was thinking in

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2016 that this book needed to be written for the reasons that you've just

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mentioned I was having all these individual conversations with people who said how did you get where you are

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this doesn't seem like a path that I could follow or I'm having challenges

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just mentally figuring out what is possible because of course you know when

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you're a graduate student your advisors they're coming they're the successful ones right they're the ones who went

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through their their work and they got the faculty positions and so what they know is how to create more faculty

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members like them and they are seldom connected to people in industry or or

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adjacent fields so that they have a way to advise us as learners about what else

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is out there Beyond becoming another 10-year track person so I wanted to write my own book

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meanwhile Kevin Kelly is in San Francisco he's working on the Peralta grants and he thinks I need to write

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this book because there's so many resources out there that people can use

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to follow alternative academic paths but nobody knows about them nobody they don't get pay so he wanted to write

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that book Katie Linder meanwhile is at Oregon State University and she in her role as

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director of their teaching and learning center she's thinking I need to write this book I work with so many graduate

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students who don't seem like they have a clear path Beyond where they're going after the degree and I've had

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conversations with so many people who have rich experiences to share and stories to tell and she was going to

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write the book fast forward to 2017 at online learning

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Consortium in was it Orlando yeah Florida we were at we were at a Disney property and the

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three of us connected I'd known Katie for years and years we've been colleagues and friends and Katie had

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known had known Kevin for a long time as well and the three of us got together and

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over dinner the conversation was well what are you working on and I said well

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I'm going to write this book on alternative academic careers and Katie said no I'm going to and Kevin me too right and we realized that we were each

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writing three very different books Kevin's was all about the resources that

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nobody knew about Katie's was all about the people whom she could connect with and mine was all

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about the theoretical way to think about those Pathways so we recognized why

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don't we all combine our talents and put the book together that way so Katie was

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the glue she's the first person who said we should do this together and she became lead author and you know head

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sled dog as we were all pulling in the same direction and it was a wonderful writing experience because I had met Katie in

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person a few times but I'd only met Kevin The Once and we wrote the whole thing over the course of 2017 remotely

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with everybody sort of dividing things up and as you've read the book Luke you

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notice that the chapters we strove to have a consistent

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tone so you couldn't tell which one of us had written which chapters but we totally did right and so some of those

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chapters are quote unquote mine some arcadies some are Kevin's but it was a fun way to get that information out

27:04

there and I'll also confess it was also really bad timing that the book got

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published from stylist press the announcements went out at the end of January 2020

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and then five weeks later there was a pandemic so in terms of you know people coming to

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the book I'm grateful that you have picked it up now and I'm hopeful that it gets a little bit more play because we

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really do want people to pick it up and say Here's a manual for how I can think this process through so yeah thanks for

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talking about the inspiration we all saw a different need and they all keystone together absolutely and it's really

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interesting because of obviously timing of the book not that great as we're all trying to figure out how do we go about

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with our new world so you know that's not the best timing however now we're still in we're still in this type of

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interesting world it is not the same clearly we still are in these different types of exploratory paths for things

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and even in 2023 I am still having conversations with people about frustration confusion I actually just

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talked to the PHD student this week who was thinking about it where she's just like so what's next I don't know like I

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don't know if I want to actually go into this field but I've done all these things already what do I actually do so

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it's super relevant even with today's day and age and my question for you now

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from hearing all of those things is how do you know that it's actually time to do this as far as looking for a

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different type of a path because for some people it seems like they reach a Breaking Point and then it's like the

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All or Nothing of just like I'm quitting my job today I can't take this anymore and just like kind of you know goodbye

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so is there a usual type of a sign of feeling a trigger something for us to be able to recognize before it gets too

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late that we should really seriously take into consideration exploring going down a different path

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yeah burnout and feelings of being unfulfilled or uncertainty or the sunk

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cost feeling of you know I spent all this money and made did put in all this time and now there isn't a job in my

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field I went through that so you imagine it's the year 2000 and my professors

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were telling me that there's going to be this wave of retirements of 19th century

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British literature people and they're going to need to fill those faculty

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lines right and it I was going to be the bumper crop of phds who had our pick of

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places to go and jobs to have and readers it didn't happen that way

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right so people retired and they didn't replace the faculty lines because things were shrinking and budgets and economy

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and all kinds of other things uh the the the hard numbers of when I got my PhD in

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North America there were 425 of us with 19th century British

30:01

literature specializations of some kind so Romanticism victorianism the art historians the literature people the

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historians themselves there were in the chronicle and modern

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language Association job lists that year eight tenure line positions

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and everybody who had a PhD the year before us was still in line right so we

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of necessity had to Pivot my partner got her PhD in

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19th century British lit she did Dickens I did art history right and we could not find jobs in our field

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as faculty members as academics and we didn't want to go through the let me

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teach five classes at five different institutions and just be on the road all the time we didn't want to go down that

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path so we reinvented ourselves we recognized that we had other kinds of skills and once you hit that burnout or

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that feeling of of unfulfillment that's a sign that it's already too late to

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start really thinking and doing in terms of alternatives for yourself now if

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you're already at that stage we can help right so there we talk about that in the book as well but don't let it get that

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far if you can possibly do right even when you're comfortable Where You Are

31:20

it pays you back to be intentional about exploring what other people do

31:25

and making connections to those other people whether you ever need to call in

31:31

a favor for those folks or you can help them out isn't the point you know they

31:36

will serve whether you make a move or you stay put and as long as you can be a

31:42

resource for other people it helps to just be connected and be part of that headspace

31:48

hmm all right so hypothetically speaking I am connected to the headspace as you just said I am recognizing that there

31:55

are patterns things are not going so well for me so now I have made up my mind this is not what I want to be able

32:01

to do I need to seek a new type of alternative and being able to actually pursue this what types of actionable

32:08

steps should I be taking in order to get this started and to do it properly and not just kind of haphazardly and just

32:14

winging it what steps should I be doing here's three and a half things in order

32:20

one find supportive colleagues who do work in places or ways that you don't know

32:28

how to do yet so if you're you're thinking about the skills that you have

32:33

in instructional design right you've got a master's degree in organizational psych or you've got a master's degree in

32:38

ID the the colleagues whom you want to connect with are the folks who maybe do

32:46

what you do but in a different industry right to find the people who went to the

32:53

corporate side of the house rather than the academic side of the house for me that was uh it used to be called astd

33:01

the American Society for training and development it's now ATD and they keep

33:06

shortening the acronym but I went to that conference and I recognized that there were all

33:13

these people who got degrees in things and then didn't go into higher education

33:19

but did almost exactly the same thing in companies so somebody who worked at Dow

33:25

Chemical or somebody who worked at Blue Cross and Blue Shield like I ended up working at Blue Cross and Blue Shield

33:31

because I had attended this conference and saw oh wait these people do cool things and I have skills to do it so

33:38

finding those supportive colleagues who are in the industries and asking people start if you're a graduate student or

33:45

you're in an academic position now start by asking your faculty colleagues hey where do your students get jobs

33:52

or do you know any of your our alumni who are working in fields that are

33:58

different from but similar to the skill sets that we want so step one is find

34:03

those colleagues and actually talk to them about what they do ask for those informational interviews ask for 15

34:08
minutes of somebody's time over coffee or Zoom the second one two is do your own skills
34:16
inventory think about the academic things that you
34:22
do I know how to write a research paper that turns into the skill of
34:30
original research I can write a report I can advocate for a path of action for
34:39
the the company or the the unit that I'm working with I ran department meetings because
nobody
34:46
else would do it everybody else step backwards right but I ran department meetings for three
years I know how to coordinate teams of people
34:54
I know how to you know work on the politics of an institution
34:59
or an organization and I know how to document the work that we're doing
35:04
those are all transferable skills and one of the things that that helps when
35:10
we do skills inventories as we translate from Academia speak that
35:17
if you just handed somebody your resume and said hey I want to work with you and they said
what is what is all of this
35:23
right I don't understand this help translate that into language that folks in Industry will
understand or folks who
35:31
work in higher education but outside of departments and schools
35:37
the third piece is to think about your career planning
35:42
as a self-defined path if if you're going to be a professor
35:52
and you are one of the lucky people who gets that assistant professor job on the
35:57
10-year line you have a career path already laid out for you you spend your
36:03
time at assistant you do these things you get promoted to associate professor then full
Professor you get tenure all
36:10

of that business that's a that's a 30-year career right there laid out in front of you and all the steps are clear

36:16

and visible alternative academic careers often don't

36:22

have ladders like that so in the book we talk about how to recognize positions that are equivalent

36:29

steps talking about if you're at an operational level now

36:35

and you want to go into supervision the the next bump up from assistant to associate professor you're looking for

36:42

an associate director position or a director position of a unit someplace or if you don't want to go into supervision

36:48

you're looking for a senior title at an industry position or in higher education

36:55

in the staff and administration so there's lots of different ways that you can put your career ladder together and

37:01

instead of going straight up rung to rung on that ladder an alternative academic career path often zigzags we

37:09

often move in and out of higher education I did so myself we often

37:15

will work uh Luke you talked about your your resume you know lab manager instructional designer director of a

37:22

thing a grants person you've you've worn many many hats yourself so understanding that career planning is

37:29

is more personal than set for you

37:35

and then the half a thing I owe my co-author Kevin Kelly a shout here he

37:41

wrote a book by Robert wapnick in 2017 called how to be everything

37:46

and wapnick has a term called multi-potential lights

37:51

which is his big 10 cent word for people who just aren't sure to do with the rest of their lives right uh

37:57

multi-potentialates are known for pursuing lots of different kinds of professional areas switching careers

38:03

several times throughout our lives and juggling lots of projects at once if that sounds like you and if some that

38:09

sounds like rewarding work welcome to being a multi-potential light

38:15

the key to that is if you take everything I've done in

38:20

my career for example it's a mess I've done 17 different

38:26

things in lots of different ways and places you know and I've said yes to a

38:31

lot of things like pursuing that Fulbright and being a CIS admin an

38:36

instructional designer a librarian for a hot minute an administrator a theorist an author all those kinds of things

38:44

so having some kind of narrative that ties that all together

38:49

is the key what would you say to somebody who doesn't know your field at

38:55

all you know listeners does your mother actually know what you do for work no

39:01

your mother tells people oh yes my son is a teacher and he teaches people how to teach right and that's what my mom

39:07

says about me she's close she's not exactly on the ball how do I how do I

39:13

explain it to my mom how do I explain it to people outside my field if you have that narrative that ties together all of

39:19

those interests that you've got that's one way to start

39:25

oh fantastic my uh parents always said make courses my dad's much more

39:30

well-versed in Academia my mom is not as much he's like oh Luke makes courses and I was like well you're not wrong but

39:36

like there's more to it but you're not inside like you're close and and most of the people you'll talk

39:43

to for alt act jobs are more like Luke's mom right than like your dissertation

39:50

advisor so yeah yeah that's something to think about exactly but I love going back to your point Tom talking about

39:56

that inventory type of a skill set and thinking about that too because one of the things that I tell for a lot of

40:01

folks who are trying to become instructional designers specifically nowadays is I think about like well

40:06

think about backward design we start first with our goals and then we work our way backwards so if you wanted to be

40:12

able to look at a current job posting as far as for your dream job of where do you want to work so if Google was hiring

40:18

for an instructional designer read that job posting see what they're looking for in a candidate and then think about

40:23

yourself do some reflection and then I guarantee you're going to recognize you're like oh I do have these skills

40:28

and like what you were just saying like yes a terminology is different they might say x I really mean why but really

40:34

it's still there and then it becomes massaging that type of information to make sure that it's accurately conveying

40:39

what it is that you really do I mean there you go you know I've been and then you're on that path So speaking about

40:46

all of that there are definitely certain types of roles that do align for folks more with our type of an academic

40:52

background compared to others and especially with the explosion of jobs because of the pandemic and having all

40:59

these different forms of teachers instructors and I mean even I've talked to plenty of professors as well too who

41:04

said it's it's been a great ride time for my new calling I'm like okay understand we all go through those

41:11

things are there certain positions you can think of off the top of your head as far as for what do align well with

41:17

someone with a type of an instructor Professor teacher type of a background I might take that question and turn it

41:24

sideways a little bit okay when we were doing the research for the book what we wanted to do was visualize the

41:29

alternative academic space and rather than

41:35

parsing that out by roll it made more sense for us to divide that out by

41:41

career stage my co-author Kevin Kelly created a

41:47

lovely chart and for those of you watching the video I'm holding it up here on a piece of paper and for those of you listening to the podcast on audio

41:55

come back to the show notes and Luke will have a copy of this and we'll share that with everybody but that chart if you imagine the

42:02

vertical axis in the middle is alternative academic at the very top is

42:07

academic and at the bottom is non-academic altogether so moving away from Academia as you come down

42:13

and then as you move from left to right it's career phase so if you're preparing for your career if you're an early

42:19

career person in the middle of your career late career or you're one of our Legacy folks who's looking to do

42:26

something different after a long while in your conversations with people that chart ended up being a really

42:33

fantastic way to think about okay if you want to work at a higher education

42:38

institution you're probably closer to the top of the chart academic to all DAC and if you want to work outside the

42:45

academy you're probably closer to the bottom of the chart so alt act to non-academic

42:50

and then when we think about our early career things all the way up at the top at the academic side right this is the

42:56

traditional stuff graduate teaching assistant assistant professor associate professor full professor

43:03

then as we move down toward alternative academic you get into things like

43:09

adjunct teaching not as your primary way of earning money but as part of a

43:15

portfolio of alternative academic things for example even with all the speaking and Consulting that I do I still like to

43:22

have my hand in a classroom teaching credit bearing courses because it helps

43:28

me to understand where today's graduate students are coming from and gives me a

43:34

pipeline into connections where I hear new voices and new ideas coming in

43:39

but also things like embedded Consulting speaking becoming an author becoming an

43:46

independent consultant or being a unit director of a campus Service Unit that

43:51

isn't necessarily something you've directly trained for colleges and universities have all kinds of service

44:00

units where if you have good people skills if you are an organized person if

44:07

you know how to keep records and data and if you know how to think about

44:13

predicting and planning then you're in good shape I'm actually going to slide

44:18

over here and take something down off my bookshelf this is something that I keep near to me

44:25

like I can reach this while I'm talking with folks and it's the project management Institute cheat sheet study

44:32

sheet for the project management process I spent a week cramming this and a whole

44:38

bunch of formulas to get my project management professional certification and that has
44:44

stood me in good stead for most of my career knowing how to
44:50

work with stakeholders plan things out communicate well about the work that you
44:56

do those are all transferable skills that regardless of whether you've been a teacher you've been
an instructional
45:02

designer for a long time start looking at the various institutes
45:07

and units and support areas at your institution or at institutions nearby
45:12

and then the bottom of that chart where we're talking about non-academic stuff where we where
you look at membership
45:18

and professional associations do they need people who have those skills that you've got
scholarly publishing working
45:25

with an academic press and keeping an ear in so for at West Virginia
45:30

University press that published one of my books Derek Kristoff is their editor and his career
started out that he was a
45:39

teaching instructor he went into scholarly publishing because it allowed him to still work
45:44

with academics and be a complete book nerd and that was
45:50

one of his big passion areas so he was able to combine those two kinds of things so there's a
lot of different ways that
45:57

that folks who are in teaching roles now or in other kinds of roles can
46:02

focus in a little bit when you think about what stage of your career are you in and where do you
want to land do you
46:09

want to land more toward the traditional academic stuff or way outside of it that's interesting I'm
trying to think
46:16

too about from an instructional design perspective because surprisingly even though this is an
instructional design
46:21

podcast I have talked to plenty of instructional designers who same thing like the professor who told me they've

46:27

been doing this for 30 years it's time to move on and then same thing with some designers they've done it for 5 10 15 20

46:33

years and they're like okay what's my next thing and it seems like all the things you said certainly do apply to

46:38

that as well well and and two if we think about do I

46:44

want to do the same thing that I know how to do or am I looking for something a little fresh a little change a little

46:49

different uh it's no shame on anybody if you get a little in a rut about the work that you

46:56

do if you're doing the same thing over and over and over again I know that if I am designing learning management system

47:03

courses with faculty members for 20 years it's gonna get a little stale

47:09

because they come with the same thing all all the time we don't understand how to do this and we have to tell them

47:14

about backward design and we have to mention that we have to follow the WIC standards and all that kind of stuff

47:19

over and over and over again so having something different or new that can be a

47:26

sideline for you or it might turn into your primary work so if you're looking to do the same

47:32

kinds of things look at Learning and Development units in Industry rather than in Academia if you want to do

47:39

something different look at the learning management system companies you've been using the LMS as an academic

47:45

instructional designer for years they have Learning and Development people at

47:50

the LMS companies and they want those people to tell others how to do with

47:56

their products or they want them to design new functions for the products every time you put in a wishlist ticket

48:03

for your learning management system somebody's on the other end of that going yeah this is a good idea we should explore that

48:09

and same thing like with video game industry design or publishing like we've talked about earlier

48:15

and I want to say I want to unsay two very specific things here note that I do

48:21

not say go knock on a library door or a museum

48:26

door you'll hear a lot of people advocating for those as Alternatives it's like oh yeah if you get bored with

48:33

or or burnt out on what you're doing just become a librarian or go go be a museum person

48:39

let me tell you somebody with an information science degree libraries and museums are specialized places where the

48:46

credentials matter if you want to go back and get a two-year Library degree and go be a librarian awesome but it's

48:54

not you've heard some people say oh yeah it's kind of a fallback position you can go be a librarian it's easy

49:00

that is a profession so yeah so part of it is is recognizing where do your

49:05

skills actually fit in a way that you could slot in very easily rather than

49:12

having to re-professionalize makes sense speaking of skills writing

49:18

dissertations that's hard quite a skill in and of itself whatever

49:23

methodology you choose it is going to be a difficult path and this was something

49:28

that I found very interesting about the book and I'd love for you to be able to summarize it for us to talk more about

49:34

it is that inside of the book there is actually a section that says making good use of a dissertation after graduation

49:41

which I love the name of that because of for many people I've talked to within the academic world is that for some

49:48

folks they have the mindset of once it's done it's done I'm never doing this again that is just you know it's just

49:54

like but wait a second like you learned about so many things within research and with interviewing with reading data

50:00

interpreting things like there's a lot of different things we could talk about here and some people are like man it's it's really done so this is certainly a

50:07

struggle as far as trying to be able to figure out what do I actually do with this especially if in the higher

50:12

education World incorporate as well and everything else too and one example that I think about when I was thinking about

50:18

from the book as well too is that I did for my dissertation it was an explanatory sequential mixed methods

50:24

approach fun nerdy type of an approach there but I actually used this type of a

50:30

research methodology and I applied that into how we evaluate our online courses

50:35

over at mitx Pro it became uh the model with the help of my colleagues that's what we based it around so that's one

50:42

example about how you can take what you've done for your research and apply it into your work but I would love to

50:47

hear more about from you from some other different types of examples about how someone can apply their dissertation

50:53

efforts into a type of a real world scenario oh fantastic and I I want to give my co-author Kevin Kelly the credit

50:59

here he was the primary writer for that chapter so I'm grateful to him to be able to summarize the advice that we all

51:05

share there and to non-specialist audiences basically everybody outside your dissertation committee your

51:12

dissertation can become evidence of skills and competencies and you listed

51:18

off a bunch so you've already done that kind of thinking a good way to start is Identify some key words that would help

51:25

your people find your stuff if they were searching for it and they knew how to find it so what are keywords from your

51:32

discipline and your sub-discipline like if you're an astrobiology or cultural studies or Tesla or sociology

51:38

what are key words that deal with the research methodology that you use you talked about mixed method and

51:43

qualitative so focus groups surveys I use gas

51:49

chromatography I do applied research I do sentiment analysis of text messages whatever that is

51:55

but also talk about your data analysis techniques are you doing regression excuse me analysis of variance the Anova

52:03

technique are you doing topic modeling what are those keywords that describe how you're doing the analysis

52:08

what is the topic for your research itself what's your research population were you

52:14

working with K-12 people higher education folks people in industry and what are aspects of your work that are

52:20

trending or perpetually popular right so data analytics or I'm working with stem

52:26

cells or I analyze social media or I'm an A change agent or organizational

52:31

change or I work in robotics or cancer research or renewable energy what are the big buzzwordy topics

52:38

you take all of those pieces together your discipline your research methodology the analysis the research

52:45

topic who you're working with and what are those big things that lay people

52:50

would understand then when you have those keywords together

52:56

you can start writing paragraphs of how to share your ideas in shorter simpler forms those can take the forms of

53:03

Journal articles conference presentations yeah those those are the things we all start with but also blogs

53:08

and listservs and social media posts each with one shining idea in it or a

53:14

podcast episode kind of like what we're doing now and finally ask what you want that

53:19

dissertation research to do for you what are the core ideas that you want to

53:24

share and what format makes the most sense for that how much time do you have to convert your dissertation into

53:31

public-facing things what do you want to reach in terms of the ideas and the

53:37

audience would that audience understand the dissertation as it's written usually not and how could you convey your ideas

53:44

without using specialized language and that's a skill and it takes practice what are your goals Beyond just

53:49

publishing your work in another format do you want to increase your exposure to a certain audience do you want people to

53:55

use your stuff in a practical way and are there career or job ideas

54:01

already in your work is there a job that you would like to do but that job doesn't really exist yet could you go to

54:09

a company or a college or university and say you know you really need somebody to

54:14

do marketing data analytics segmentation and you don't have somebody yet but that's what I did my dissertation on and

54:21

boy could I help you that kind of stuff it comes out of that skill inventory

54:26

when you're thinking about your dissertation I love that that approach is so fantastic too because you're right

54:32

people certainly do need a lot of help in different types of areas and until you actually start saying those types of words are like oh yeah we don't have

54:38

that department or like Oh Yeah we actually got rid of that two years ago but we really need it back so no it all

54:45

makes a lot of sense well I like to Pivot for a second Tom because going aside from the whole dissertation aspect

54:51

another huge thing that a lot of people inside of Academia within our space talk about is with Consulting that always

54:58

seems to be everyone saying that well once I do X Y and Z I'm going to go into Consulting as well too and it's like

55:03

okay great but do you know how to actually do that is always kind of like my next question and I was fortunate

55:10

enough I had Christy Tucker she came on the podcast a while ago talking about well how do you do freelance because

55:16

that's another thing that everyone's always like I'm just going to do freelance and I was like yeah but it actually takes quite a bit of effort and

55:21

some thought here and trying to make sure the customer's happy and finding the clients and you know going through all those motions so to me Consulting

55:28

still has that type of a similarity where it's not like I can just say hey I'm now a consultant like it's just it

55:34

doesn't work like that so in your opinion from what you wrote about can you describe for us about how one

55:39

actually does get into Consulting and how to really make this in a an effective type of a practice Yeah that

55:45

that was one of my chapters because I was the person who got out there and did the side hustle and that side hustle

55:51

became my main hustle for a while as well and then I came back into higher education I'm one of those big chickens

55:57

who likes to have a you know health insurance and a steady paycheck at the same time we are in a culture now where

56:04

almost everybody is expected to have some kind of second line of what we do

56:10

and even if we go back even 10 or 15 years that expectation wasn't there

56:15

so when we think about having a side hustle or a second piece or or doing

56:21

consulting either as what we do for a living or as a nice little addition to

56:26

the full-time job that we've got you talk about your own personal brand and these are things that we don't talk

56:34

about in Academia right so how much should you charge for

56:40

giving a talk doing a workshop no one will tell you right

56:46

um and that was a boundary that I had to really get over uh when we're thinking

56:52

about personal branding right so for what am I doing this work where would I want to do

56:58

it how do I want to be known what is this the quick story about me that I want people to remember

57:06

starting out though with Consulting is starting to build an audience in another

57:11

way so avenues for publication avenues for communication so writing blogs doing

57:17

podcasts like this one doing an opinion piece and getting it published in The Chronicle of Higher Education or the

57:23

conversation or the evolution or those kinds of spaces where lots of higher education readers will be will be

57:29

looking the other part of it is myth busting right so self-promotion is unscholarly

57:35

we should be volunteering our efforts yeah if you have a 10-year line job and you're being paid to have that extra

57:41

bandwidth to give back to the the service if you don't have someone paying

57:47

you and then part of your job is giving back to the profession guess what that's

57:52

a volunteer effort and the challenge for me was okay well

57:57

is is it okay if I say I'm pretty good and you should work with me and the answer is yes there

58:04

another myth that we have to bust no one will want to hear from me I'm just starting out

58:10

it's the newer voices in our field who are asking questions that the rest of us thought were settled a long time ago or

58:18

they're asking questions that we didn't even think to ask so when you're thinking about how you

58:24

want to pitch yourself to other folks with Consulting is there a problem or a question that nobody has figured out yet

58:32

is there something where you can help people even get one more step toward

58:37

yeah we understand that that's a value that you bring

58:42

there's another myth to bust here which is someday I will get noticed if I just

58:47

work hard and persevere what that means is you will put in an awful lot of effort and no one will pay

58:53

you any attention at all right now every once in a while people get quote unquote discovered right some some

59:00

long-serving person in the field goes hey that person that younger person is doing uh really good work or this person

59:06

you know who's been in another field for a long time and just came in is fantastic and you all should look at that person

59:12

that almost never happens so the the challenge there is

59:17

you have to create moments where you are visible where you are out there in

59:24

front of other people and then you have to tell people that it's okay to continue the conversation you can give

59:30

the best conference presentation you've ever given in your life and people will leave it and go oh I'm really thinking

59:36

about that and this person really helped me to to understand a new thing that's awesome and no one will reach out to you

59:44

the other part of that is is like I'll charge less or I'll do it for free just to get the exposure

59:49

value your work so at the end of conference presentations when I was first starting

59:55

out in my career my last slide was a smiling picture of me with the one book that I had

1:00:01

published and it had my website Thomas J tobin.com on there and I would give a

1:00:07

one sentence non-commercial at the end of the the presentation and I would say

1:00:13

thank you very much for being here with me today I hope you got some good ideas out of this I speak and consult on this

1:00:20

issue and a bunch of other ones if you'd like to continue the conversation here's how to get in touch with me thanks again

1:00:25

for coming and then I turn that slide off and I go to the last slide I always check with the conference

1:00:31

organizers first to see if that's frowned upon and if they don't want me to do it I don't do it but if it's okay

1:00:37

to say hey by the way if you'd like to continue the conversation get in touch with me that's how people know the the

1:00:44

last piece about that is uh marketing yourself right so you do

1:00:50

have to do a little self marketing you have to put a rate sheet together you have to put a website together for

1:00:55

people to see and in the book we talk about how do you set your rates the the

1:01:00

question that no one will tell you about we tell you about and you know how do people know you're

1:01:06

an expert I hate to say it this simply but you tell them you're an expert and then of

1:01:13

course you have the chops to back it up it is though that simple give people ways to understand the signal right it's

1:01:22

not just oh that was really great I wonder if they consult but oh that was really great and they said at the end

1:01:28

that they consult so I'm gonna get in touch with them so that's one way to start is think about your personal brand

1:01:34

think about avenues for publication and communication and getting yourself out there and then actually say by the way I

1:01:42

do this and see what comes in oh fantastic love it Tom thank you for sharing all those things wonderful

1:01:49

amazing moments in the folks at home I hope you were taking notes because we've talked about on the show at length about

1:01:55

building your brand finding your voice but I also love too the whole myth busting segment because because it's so

1:02:00

true where people do talk about how is this like just do it for free it's fine and it's just like eventually you keep

1:02:07

on getting these free gigs and all of a sudden you're like I'm working 40 hours a week for free and I don't know what's

1:02:12

coming next like you're trying to the opposite is actually true when I raised

1:02:17

my rates I got more business because people thought oh that person must be worth the more money yes yes exactly

1:02:25

it's that value because you are now saying no I am credible no I am valuable my time is valuable but you will get a

1:02:30

whole bunch out of it because you know well what I'm actually bringing to the table and it just is so true no so

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absolutely true with everything you just said so fantastic I love that well Tom there's one more thing I have for you

1:02:44

and then I will I will get you out of here and thank you for your time but the last thing I wanted to ask about

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building off of building a brand is that we also did talk about going as far as for building out a portfolio which to me

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goes hand in hand for sure because it's an overwhelming type of an overarching thing but in the book one thing that

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caught my eye immediately was that within the chapter of the book talking about the portfolio it says talking

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about building it over time and with intentionality that is different I have

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never heard a phrase like that way before which I thought was super interesting can you describe for us the significance of why those words were

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included within building the portfolio glad to do it and I'm actually glad you we talked about one of the chapters that

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Kevin wrote one that I wrote and this one Katie Linder was the primary writer for that chapter so I'll summarize her

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advice here a little bit she talks about building a habit of documentation and what that means is

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keeping a master list of your professional accomplishments your training your credentialing your skill building your presentations Publications

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projects other Milestones along with a record of the dates when those occurred and once you have that Master list other

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and maybe more creative forms of documentation you can generate from those and every time you do your annual

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review you go like oh what projects did I work on this year and I got to go back and look at my emails and all that kind

1:04:04

of stuff so it helps you with your day job as well as with possibly going into

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an alternative academic career to just get in the habit of once a week

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saying what am I working on and throwing that information into a chronological list maybe you categorize them like

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classes taught Publications conference presentations professional roles work products projects your educational

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records grants receive lots of different things but you don't have to necessarily categorize absolutely everything

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if you identify the things that you need to be documenting though it's kind of a

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starting point there's a lot of different ways to document it for example Katie talks about she was a

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frequent podcaster and each of the podcasts has a website with an episode guide and that was a way to document her

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work over time she links to her podcast websites on her curriculum vitae for anybody who's

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interested in learning more about those projects and then once you know those kinds of

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categories you can start to schedule in updates in your calendar and you know

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monthly check-ins to add professional accomplishments Milestones to a Master

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CV or resume and you're not losing a record of those areas of your professional life as you're completing

1:05:23

them now that gets big really quickly right it's easier than you might think

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to lose track of it because you do a lot of things and so another form of documentation is

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just journaling or blogging or a private or maybe public reflection on your

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professional work you know whether you write them down do an audio recording do a video diary those can document you

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know for synthesis for later time and it forces you to think about well what are the themes what's the through line how

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do I talk about the values that I embody in my work what am I saying yes to and

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what am I saying no to and talking about that maybe every six months or a year

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allows you to say okay I've got this master list of bazillion things in it and here's my quick diary about

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how I perceive the path that I'm taking and having that website as a central hub

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for documentation you put your curriculum vitae your e-portfolio your Publications presentations Grant

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overviews archives those kinds of things so to wrap up for our conversation for

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today Luke the all tax space has many different type of work under that

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umbrella the wide open nature of that career path it can be kind of scary or it can be liberating I mean my co-author

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Kevin Kelly he went a hundred percent independent and he works with colleges and universities on their inclusion

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efforts my other co-author Katie Linder she parlayed her all-tac work into director

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positions Dean position she's now an associate Vice Chancellor at UC Denver and I myself I've got both

1:07:05

a full-time job with the University of Wisconsin Madison and I've got a rewarding personal Consulting career

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where I get to work with colleagues around the world to lower barriers to learning so all of us started by finding

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a big issue a challenge a problem or a gap that we just had to address

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then we found the people who were also passionate about those ideas and we started to create our networks from

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there and that's probably a good place to come full circle for this conversation too wherever you are in

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your career Journey know that there are people around you and they are your first and your best resource kind of

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like we're doing with this podcast itself absolutely awesome Tom fantastic

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fantastic love it love the summary about everything really cool we came full circle was not planned so that's awesome

1:07:56

I'm glad you did that well it's on the last very last question I want to be able to ask you is where can people go

1:08:02

to learn more about you your work your book books plural feel free to plug away

1:08:07

awesome well thank you I hope listeners will find our stylist press book going alt ack either through the link in this

1:08:14

episode show notes or at their nearest library and as for me individually I'm

1:08:19

still on Twitter at Thomas J Tobin and for people who'd like to connect with me

1:08:24

or learn more about my advocacy and work you can visit thomasj.tobin.com and

1:08:29

we'll have a link in the show notes there too listeners I hope that our conversation today has helped you to

1:08:35

think more deeply about alternative academic careers and I'd love to hear from you when you have questions ideas

1:08:41

to bring successes to share so Luke thank you very much for inviting me onto your podcast it's been a real pleasure

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talking with you and Exploring altac Careers today absolutely Tom thank you so much thank you again well thanks

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again Tom and we will definitely be in touch with you folks at home definitely go down into the show notes as Tom

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already said it I will be including that because he's a professional so he knows that a podcast host should link these

1:09:05

things so all the things that Tom talked about today with the book and everything else too from the resources from the show I'll include down below but Tom

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once again thank you for your time thank you for being here absolutely thanks for having me take care everybody Tom once

1:09:17

again thank you so much for coming on the show if you are watching this interview and for all of those learning nerds out there be sure to follow Tom

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like I said LinkedIn Twitter he's extremely active on social media all this posts are extremely insightful and

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valuable so be sure to do that obviously pick up your copy of the book for everything that we talked about on

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today's show is really really going to help you out if you are thinking about your next move in your career

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identifying your skill sets thinking about everything else definitely be sure to pick up that one and then there very

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last thing I wanted to be able to say folks is that once again if you are looking to be able to learn more about

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how to focus on the professional development skills of an instructional design you want to take your skills to

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the next level be sure to apply to instructional design Institute I would love to be able to work with you and to help you to get you to where you want to

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be able to go as always if you have any questions for me you can reach out to me either via email my website LinkedIn

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whatever I'm everywhere I'm on social media on the internet nowadays there is some way for you to be able to find me

1:10:18

hope you like this episode be a friend tell a friend share it with somebody who you know is going through all these

1:10:24

things and they can help them out but that's hey folks that's all I have for you today so of course have to say the

1:10:30

very last thing of scenery out there I'll talk to you next time