

Author conversations

Pearson's author roundtable

Featured authors:

Eric Gaze
Bowdoin College

Tracie Miller-Nobles
Austin Community College

Niva Tro

David Laibson
Harvard University

Lourdes Norman-McKay
Florida State College at Jacksonville

Brooke Whisenhunt
Missouri State University

Jeff Manza
New York University

Mary Anne Poatsy
Montgomery County Community College

Moderator:

Elayn Martin-Gay
University of New Orleans

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Does anyone remember the exact moment you knew you wanted to be an educator?

Mary Anne Poatsy

I always wanted to be an educator. That was my undergraduate degree. I just didn't do that in real life until children, and it became another option for me later on. So I was glad to kind of come full circle as an educator.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

I actually never wanted to be an educator. [Laughter]. You know, I got my degree, and I got my CPA license, and I came out after the university, and I wanted to work in public accounting and be in that career forever. And I had grown up with parents who were educators. They were high school teachers. And I remember seeing how rough it was for them. And I never wanted to be an educator. But I started teaching and doing training when I was working in public accounting, and I loved it. So I think I lucked into the absolute best job in the whole world.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Very nice. Anybody else?

Eric Gaze

I have two great fears in life, one of which is public speaking. [Laughter]. The other is heights, so it's somewhat ironic being a tall teacher. [Laughter]. I was in grad school. I mean, I was in graduate school

just to study mathematics. It wasn't to become a teacher. And, as Tracie was just saying, you sort of — you fall in love with it once you get going.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

I know your feeling, because people have trouble understanding. I'm the same way. The one course I could not pass was something that was so easy for everyone else. I had all my courses done in four years. But I had to go back an extra summer for a speech — public-speaking course. Yes. What got me over that was tutoring the football team. [Laughter]. Then I made it after tutoring the football team. Great answers! Anybody else?

David Laibson

That's how I got my start.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Really?!

David Laibson

It was tutoring other students as an undergraduate. And it was incredibly fun! And I loved it! And I think that was a key step toward saying, 'Yeah, I'll be an academic.'

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

OK! All right. Anybody else?

Lourdes Norman-McKay

I would say I was discouraged from teaching. Coming up in a research-based environment, you know, training to be a scientist — that was sort of the thing you did if you couldn't do research. So I was looked at sort of like the body snatchers had come along and taken me when I said that I was turning down an NIH grant to go and teach at a community college. [Chatter]. Yeah, right? Talk about parental disappointment. [Laughter]. But obviously that's turned around. And I'm happiest when I teach. And it's an amazing way to impact our society.

Jeff Manza

I think your story of starting out as a researcher and discovering teaching is probably true for a lot of us. That was certainly my, you know, story. That I went to graduate school wanting to be an intellectual, wanting to have the space to write big books. And I learned to love teaching in the course of graduate school, and then becoming a professor, and learning that teaching is part of the job. And realizing that, actually, it's incredibly rewarding when done well and with some passion and commitment. I'm a very different person than I would have guessed 15 years ago because of that.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Yeah, our students really impact us. You know, when we walk into the classroom, we know that we're making an impact on individuals' future lives. And, you know, I think about how much of a difference I've made in students' future careers. And it's so nice when you get an email from a student several years later and they're talking about how excited they are and how much you made a difference in their career.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

It's amazing how well timed those emails are, too. [Laughter]. Right when you need it. [Laughter]. Like, you're at a low — you're like, 'Oh, there's this email.'

Brooke Whisenhunt

I came up with this task for myself last year. And I did a letter-writing campaign for the unsung heroes in my life. So, these were people that — I felt like my parents and my spouse, like, they know how I feel, but I wanted to write letters to people who might not have known how they impacted me. And then I looked back over the 30 letters I wrote, and at least 10 or 15 of them were educators in my life. And I felt like, for me, when I was thinking about this question, like, that's who I want to be for someone. And those are what those emails do for us. It's like, you get to be that person who nudges that student on the next step on their journey. And you may not know that for 20 years, but I'm hoping, someday, I'll get that letter back, maybe.

Niva Tro

I had a similar experience to you, Lourdes. When I was doing a postdoc at UC Berkeley, and I decided that I really wanted to have a career that focused more on teaching than research. Although I love both, and for a long time I was sort of undecided. And the day I decided to do that, my advisor sat me down, and he said, 'You know what, Niva? You'll like teaching for 2 or 3 years and then it's going to get completely boring. And you're going to wish you had done a more research-heavy career.' And here I am 28 years later and still loving it. [Laughter].

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Yeah, I was told something similar. Like, if you change your mind in a few years, we'll take you back. And I haven't made that call yet. So I'm pretty set, I think.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

I mean, it's nice to know it's going to be there. But we're kind of rolling into the next question, which is great. And I think you might have started that roll. It's about being proud. Can you define a moment — you were talking about moving students and making differences in their lives — so is there a distinct moment you can remember, each of you, when you were really proud of being an educator. Can anyone name that?

Eric Gaze

Well, in addition to helping students, which is incredibly powerful — I mean, those emails that you get really are fabulous. But as an author, you are able to help other instructors. And, honestly, for me, those have been my proudest moments — when faculty members have come up to me at conferences and said, 'You know, thank you for the curriculum that you developed. I just love teaching with that curriculum.' And you touched so many more lives, right, through the teachers who are using your materials.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Excellent. Same kind of answer for others? Is there a distinct moment?

Mary Anne Poatsy

I think, since I teach technology at a community college, right. So my student population is pretty diverse. So I get the students, the young ones who kind of think that they know everything as they are walking in first day. And then I get the 70-year-old moms or grandmoms or whomever that are coming back and just trying to learn something new or keeping up with their kids or grandkids. And watching the light bulbs go off and having them at the end of the class just kind of saying, 'This was a lot better than I thought it was going to be. Like, I didn't know that I didn't know all this stuff. You know, I'll remember this.' That's really cool. That's really cool.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

That is cool. And you might be the one that might want to start off a question that we want to know about. And that is, how has technology changed teaching?

Mary Anne Poatsy

Wow. I mean, I got into this because I was thrown in to teach one of the first online courses. I had no idea. Like, I was retyping my lecture notes, which mimicked the book. And I'm thinking, 'What the heck was I doing?' But once you figured out and you had more tools to use, the ability to reach students — and now, especially with the technology where students can have all the content on their phones and wherever they are, and — it just, I think, allows them to fit learning in at their convenience. It's no longer just, you know, you have to go to study hall and fit it in here. It's a much more complex life that everyone leads.

Niva Tro

I think technology has sort of catalyzed a change from passive learning to active learning in many ways. I think when I first started teaching, I was of the mindset where I would just go up there, and students would absorb what I said, and then, you know, I would assign a problem set, and then they would on their own, they'd passively read the book, and then do the problem set. But now, even in large classes, I can have accountability. And I can have interactivity. And I can have a conversation with my whole class through things like Learning Catalytics, for example. Or I can talk about a topic for a while, and then ask a question, and I can get feedback, and I can see what students are understanding. And I can have peer-to-peer instruction as well. And so it's sort of democratized education in many ways, and allowed it to be more active — not just in the classroom but even out of the classroom as well.

Jeff Manza

These are... I was just going to say, the talk about active learning has been around higher education for decades, but what that really means to have each student prepared to actually participate requires a set of tools that we didn't really have until the digital era. And, you know, I can get 95% of my kids to do their homework ahead of time if I give them some credit for it, and all of a sudden it just changes the whole environment. I can flip the class and give them the responsibility to teach each other and push themselves in ways that you just couldn't do 10 years ago, five years ago. And I think that's the thing, the single thing, that I think this technology has allowed.

David Laibson

There's two more pieces that I want to throw in, which is the real-time feedback. So, active learning is so critical. Absolutely. But if you get the answer three weeks later, it doesn't work. You need to have, you need to do the exercise or think through the problem, and then get feedback in real time. And that's now possible with these online tools.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, and the feedback students receive when it's 2 am and they're doing their homework, and I'm sleeping, [laughter] and, you know, they're getting...

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

How dare you! [Laughter].

Tracie Miller-Nobles

...amazing feedback about what they're doing right and wrong on their homework. They don't have to wait until they come into class the next day.

David Laibson

Or three weeks later when it gets graded by the teaching fellow — is the old model.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

It's incredible.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

They don't even remember what the question was.

Niva Tro

That immediate feedback, I think, is super important. There was a little study that was posted in the *Journal of Chemical Education* a couple of years ago on the effect of pre-tests on student performing on national exam. And in the pre-test that students took, and then were graded, and they got feedback a week later, it made no difference to take the pre-test. But in the pre-tests where they got immediate feedback on what they did right and wrong as they were taking it, because they were taking it on a computer, it improved their test scores. And especially for those students that were weaker. It's interesting results.

Brooke Whisenhunt

Well, I was just thinking, from psychology, like — for years we've had experts on the science of learning. We know how students learn, but you couldn't implement that in a text in a way to take advantage of the science of learning. And for me, technology was that part that now allowed us to take advantage of what we know about the science of learning. So you can now leverage the technology to do these things — give immediate feedback, use the testing effect — do all these things that we know leads to learning. And to me, that's been the greatest thing about technology — is that we can actually use the science now.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Well, and I really like that you can take something like an animation that you know is going to benefit the student to grasp something that's abstract. And you can assign it. So you're assigning that, and then you're assessing them on watching it. And it brings a relevancy to the content. I mean, how often do we say, 'Oh, we have to make it relevant, make it real world,' and here — now you have a platform where you can give real data. You can have them interact with the data and analyze it in a way that you never could have done in a static platform. So, you're adding that richness of content and access that we didn't have before.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Absolutely. Let's let David — what was your other point?

David Laibson

One more thing that I think is critical. Think about the teaching fellows, teaching assistants, who are not grading the problem sets and passing them back three weeks later, but are instead now free to spend time with students. So we're moving all that really unproductive grading activity — check, check plus, check minus — to interactions that are much more meaningful. That's kind of the last critical piece.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, and think about the amount of time that we save in our classroom. Because now — you know, it used to be I had to go over every homework problem and, even if the students — even if I thought the students knew it, I still went over it. Now, before I go into class, I can look at the homework problems. I can see, okay — the majority of the students missed this homework problem. All the other ones they seemed okay on. So now I only have to go through that one problem. And I have all this wealth of time in my classroom that I didn't have before we had technology.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

You can use more time diagnosing, and less time trying to do the data [inaudible].

Mary Anne Poatsy

And addressing the specific needs rather than, you know, wasting an hour of lecture time on something that they already understand.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Lourdes brought a great example. I just remember teaching volumes of solids of revolution. And, oh my goodness, if you can't draw well, [laughter], you are not doing any student a favor at all.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

That's how every teacher starts when they go to do a drawing, right? I'm no artist, but. [Laughter]. Now you can just assign it in Mastering. So. [Laughter].

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, and I think the other thing that we're also, you know, we haven't talked about yet is, how technology benefits those students who probably would have dropped the class. But now, technology is helping them stay in the class. So, in accounting we always say, 'If you don't know the first four chapters, then it's going to be a disaster for the rest of the semester.' So we designed a tutorial, accounting cycle tutorial, that helps students who typically struggle in those first four chapters to make it through that content. And they get all that extra help that I can't necessarily give them in class. But they get that through the technology, and it's made all the difference. And it's helped students to stay in the course and make it through the rest of the semester.

Eric Gaze

Right, and having the resources available whenever they want. So your lectures in particular, right? They're just there. I mean, why just have the one-off where students hopefully were awake when you said something important, or actually wrote down the thing that they were supposed to. It's just amazing, just having it all available for them so they can continually look at it if they need to.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

So let's turn our role a little bit from teachers, and let's talk about writing and your role as an author. When was the time you decided you might want to write your experiences down? Actually write a book? Become an author?

Jeff Manza

Well, I have a story about my experiences. I am a sociologist. I had done a little study that was asking the question, why is the content in introductory sociology textbooks so out of date, and teaching our students things that we know are fundamentally not at the core of what the sociological research agenda

is all about? And, in the course of doing that, I read every textbook that I could find on the market. And I was so dissatisfied with the kinds of things — not just the particular puzzle I was looking at — but the kinds of things that were going into these books. And I was quite convinced in particular that having a single author or two people write a textbook, you know, just is a very difficult model. These are large complicated disciplines. So the insight that we had was to kind of write a book collectively where different people contribute different chapters and pieces depending on their research interests and their teaching backgrounds. But it was really the discovery and kind of dissatisfaction with the kinds of textbooks that existed. That was, for me, a big motivator to kind of become involved in trying to create a better one.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

I'll bet your story is not unique. Is his story unique? I found the same thing. There were things lacking. The order was lacking. There was much lacking in the books that were available. And so my solution was to do one in the order, and in the way, and containing the material that I wanted. So I'll bet — anybody else want to chime in on that?

Mary Anne Poatsy

So, for me it was, the textbooks that were currently available were talking about the computer as this unique machine that you would rarely interact with. And at the time, everyone pretty much had a PC and a desktop. But a PC in their home, and at school, et cetera. But the current textbooks at the time weren't addressing, like, how to use the computer, how to maintain it, and the little tricks and all of that. And so that's when our book came in and addressed a lot of those issues, and brought it to not this foreign machine, but something that you're using every single day.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

My path to authorship actually took a little different approach. So, I actually started working on other individuals' books. So I would do the supplements, and I did the PowerPoints, and I did the instructor's resource manual, and all of these additional pieces. And, in looking at those other textbooks that were out there, I remember thinking to myself, 'You know, this is different than how I teach it in the classroom. And, you know, I know I use this book. But when I teach this subject, I teach it differently, and I think my students learn it better when I do it in this unique approach.' And, so that's actually how I got started. I got started working on other people's thoughts and books, and then I had the opportunity to come on to a textbook and really integrate what I do in my classroom, and how I teach, and how my students are successful. And I remember one of the greatest compliments I had was when I had a colleague who came up to me after the first edition that I published, and she said, you know, 'When I read the book, I hear your voice. It's like I'm sitting in your classroom, and I can see you teaching that subject matter.' And to me, that was the utmost compliment I could have ever received. Because I thought, that's my goal. My goal is, I only get the opportunity every semester to teach X number of students. But I want to reach a whole magnitude of students, and so that they can benefit from having this great opportunity to be successful in accounting. And I think, as an author, that's the opportunity that I have.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

So in general, I'm hearing basically a dissatisfaction, a personal dissatisfaction on what was out there at the time. And the want and the need to do something that you thought might be better for students. And that leads me to another question.

David Laibson

Well, for me, it was actually — it was the students themselves.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Oh, nice!

David Laibson

So, it was talking to students, and hearing the lack of enthusiasm that I felt was shocking. Because introductory economics can be enormously fun. [Laughter]. It's about how the whole world works. [Laughter]. It doesn't need to be the stuff that we think.

Eric Gaze

It *is* enormously fun! [Laughter].

David Laibson

Yeah, it is!

Eric Gaze

It is! The opportunity cost of not knowing economics. [Laughter].

David Laibson

So it's enormously useful. It's personally relevant. It gives you a handle for understanding the whole wide world. It has so many different angles of interest. And yet, you talk to the typical student coming out of a first-year course, and they're absolutely miserable. And I thought, how is this possible that this subject that is so exciting for me, so relevant, so useful, so interesting — everyone I know in economics loves the subject [laughter] — and yet the students hate it. So, how can I communicate my enthusiasm. How can I make this relevant for them. So it was their dissatisfaction that got me energized to introduce an economics that would really make them love the field the way I do, and the way so many people I know do.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

You're kind of answering the question, though. The next question is, how do you want your work to impact students? And, you know, that was what you answered by wanting your students to be excited, you wanted them to be engaged, you wanted them to love the course, the subject area like you love it. Is there anything else you wanted to add to that?

David Laibson

I want it to be personally useful to them, too. So not just to be entertained, but also to realize this is an amazing tool for organizing the way you understand the world. For proceeding with the decisions that you make. A tool that you're going to use. I say it to my students, 'I'm not that interested about how you perform during the semester. What I really care about is how you use this for the next 50 years of your life.' That's what I'm excited about.

Niva Tro

Can I piggyback on that for a minute? Well, first of all, chemistry is the way the world works. [Laughter]. Not economics.

David Laibson

It's so personally relevant.

Eric Gaze

Now it's getting interesting.

Niva Tro

But, you said the word 'relevance.' And that's actually one of the things that I noticed in the books that were out there, too — that, for example, you'd learn some topic in chemistry and the author would use some reaction that wasn't relevant to anything I'd ever heard of as a student, right? And so, what I want to do is, I want to say, 'Well, wait a minute, we have so many great examples of how chemistry affects everything we do. Why don't we use examples that students have heard about.' And so that was a big part of what motivated me.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

I agree, entirely. And I'll even piggyback on chemistry. Because I believe chemistry *is* how the world works. [Laughter]. Because it leads to microbiology. [Laughter]. But, you know, for example, in microbiology we have a chemistry unit. And nobody was ever talking about ions and electrolytes, and how we use this in medicine all the time. And that's just an example, one of many, in how you can make the content really relevant to something they identify with. Something they know. And I would say that none of us — I wouldn't say no one — but I would say very few people probably set out and say, 'You know what I'd really like to write? A textbook.' [Laughter]. Like, I just don't think that's where people tend to start. [Laughter].

Eric Gaze

And what's sort of interesting, and both of you talked about this earlier, about starting out as researchers and gravitating towards teaching. And I think what I'm hearing from everyone is that really, the teaching process is what has informed the writing of the textbooks, right? I mean all of this is coming out of the classroom. It's from wanting your students to be engaged, wanting them to have a more meaningful experience in whatever our disciplines are. And, you know, that teaching part is really important.

Brooke Whisenhunt

And I felt like, for me anyway, like, there were actually a lot of books out there that I thought were well written. Beautiful works of poetry in psychology. Like beautiful writing. And so for me it was more, when the technology got to a place where I could actually leverage that to do different things that we couldn't do before. And so, we did a big redesign at my institution where we redesigned our introductory psychology class and used technology. I have this, like, vivid moment in my mind of sitting in my office after three years of work on redesigning our introductory psychology class, and we're about to hit the button on the data. Like, did this improve learning outcomes, and what happened to our D, F, W rate? Like, how many students got a D, or an F, or withdrew from the class. And I'm about to click the button, and I remember, like — my heart's pounding, I'm sweating, and I'm like, did it work? Did it not work? Did I just spend three years of my life on nothing? And I clicked the button, and it turned out our D, F, W rate went down by 10%. And when you have 2,500 students, that was like 250 students passed that class successfully that did not the previous year. And then it was like this idea: if I can do this here, the technology is now such that maybe we could do this for thousands more students. So for me it was, like, the writing is there. It's okay, I like it, these books are fine. But what if we could do more than just good writing?

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, and, you know, I think — so I teach at a community college. And we have such diverse students. We have students that come in that are wonderful, great students — very prepared for the college setting.

And then we have students that really struggle — aren't academically prepared for the level of a college course. And what I saw was textbooks that were leaving out those students, the students that weren't academically prepared. So you'd read the textbook, and it would be at a level that was so high — reading level — that it didn't reach those students. And then they didn't have the technology piece, so the students couldn't watch videos, and they couldn't do interactives, and they didn't get all the feedback through their homework. And so my goal, when I thought about the revision, was I wanted to reach those students — not the A students in my class.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

They're going to make it no matter what.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

They're going to make it no matter what. But I wanted to reach the students that I didn't think would make it. And that was my goal. That's — who was I writing the book for? I was writing the book for those students that I don't see at the end of the class. I wanted to keep them, to figure out a way.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Excellent. So right now chemistry makes the world go around. Economics makes the world go around. But can we agree that it takes mathematics too? [Laughter]. Can we agree on that?

Mary Anne Poatsy

And let me remind you all you're talking about technology. [Laughter].

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

By the way, does anybody want to take a guess, a gander, at how long it took you to produce the first edition of any text you might be affiliated with.

Brooke Whisenhunt

Lourdes and I are in a great position to answer this question.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Okay.

Brooke Whisenhunt

Her first edition just went to print, right? So how long did it take you?

Lourdes Norman-McKay

That's right. On Friday. Six years. Six years. Yes.

Brooke Whisenhunt

And mine's coming out in June, and it's been — at that point it will be four and a half years.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

No, I was saying how at a faculty lunch or something that I went to recently, one of the professors said, 'Oh, so you teach full time, and you're a parent, and so what do you do, like — set aside a couple hours a day to write?' I'm like, [laughter] all day. [Laughter]. You know, there's not a real understanding as to how much time really goes into this. I think there is this perception that you just are going to sit down at the computer for a couple of hours, maybe 10 hours a week, and you're going to hammer out this book.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Well, talk about the creative process then. That's part of it, so...

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Right. Right. So, I think, first you have to get yourself in a position for writing. And you're writing every day. And once you step away from writing every day, you're losing your train of thought, you're losing, you know, where you were in the process. And it's kind of like watching a movie for the first 15 minutes and then walking away from it for two hours — like, you can't do that and still have the continuity of the movie in your mind. And that's the way that writing is, too. Only, you're writing for thousands and thousands of people. You're not just writing for you. And you're not just writing for your own students. Although I know that's the premise that we take when we sit down to do this. So the creative process is — it *is* — it's a creative process that you have to carve out time for every day. And that you think about every day.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, and it doesn't stop. I mean, you get that first edition done, and it doesn't stop. You know, you — I, you know — every time I walk into the classroom, I think about my textbook, and how can I improve the content? How can I change the way we're doing things in the textbook to make it better and better for students? And so every time we're up for a revision, we're making significant changes in the book to make it better. And it takes a whole team of people. You know, I have a co-author, I have people that work at Pearson that help. You know, I have colleagues that give me great feedback. I have students that give me excellent advice. You know, this book wouldn't be here if it wasn't for all those people that help in that process.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Do we all agree it takes a village to create a work?

Mary Anne Poatsy

It takes a village. Not to mention very understanding spouses, and children.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

But it becomes a part of your life. Yes.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Well, Brooke, you're in the home stretch here — with another, what, six months until yours is out?

Brooke Whisenhunt

Yes. Yes.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

And so, like, that last six months is grueling. [Laughter].

Brooke Whisenhunt

Thank you for that encouragement.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

I just want you to know what you're headed toward so that you can psychologically prepare yourself.

Brooke Whisenhunt

It's like telling someone on mile 25 of the marathon, 'You've just got 20 miles left.' [Laughter].

Lourdes Norman-McKay

I know. I know. No, but I mean, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's shining brightly. So you will make it, you'll be fine. But I mean, I think — what do you see moving into this last six months? What are your feelings on that?

Brooke Whisenhunt

Well, so I think probably more so than anyone at the table, mine has been a little bit different because we wrote digital first. So, it was really interesting to write that way because we were writing — it was kind of fun, actually. Like, every learning objective was, like, how's the best way to teach this? Is it to write it for them to read it? Or for them to do it? Or for them to see it? Or for them to hear it? And so, we just got to have creative license. And some of that stuff at the end, they can't do yet. Like, oh, you're going to have to go back to the drawing board because we can't do that. And then some of the stuff, just at the last second, it's like — we can do it now! So, that's been part of the struggle all along, is that we're writing for tech that may or may not be there. But it might be there for second edition. And so, digital first is a whole new ball game, I think — and all the tools, and ways you get to think about learning in different ways. But it adds another dimension of, we're developing our own videos, and we're editing all of that, and it's all the interactives you have to think about, and — not just the content. So, it's just a different ball game.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Mary Anne, did you want to say something?

Mary Anne Poatsy

Well, I mean, I totally agree. Actually, when we started writing our book 15 years ago, the vision was to incorporate videos and the interactives in the text somehow. But the technology didn't exist then. So we had to have the little margin notes — like, okay, now's the time to play that video, right? Which never really happened. So now we're in, you know, the interactive textbook and it will work very nicely. I'm — we're hoping. So finally our vision is coming. But the authoring cycle. So when we were asked to start our book, we had to work with the release of the Office books as well. So we were working on a very tight deadline. So we had nine months to write our first edition.

Jeff Manza

One thing I'll say about the complexity of writing a textbook. A couple people have asked, you know, 'So you've done one. What's it like? Should it be something I might consider?' To which I say, 'Nobody in their right mind would write a textbook.' [Laughter]. It's just, it takes too long, it's too demanding, it never ends. But thank god there are people who actually care enough, you know, about student learning to realize that these textbooks play a key role, and are willing to go through the — but it is an immense amount of work. And it is ongoing. It never really ends. And it kind of consumes you. I think, in my case, I feel like I am a better social scientist, a better sociologist because I [inaudible] textbook.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Oh, without a doubt.

Mary Anne Poatsy

Oh, for sure. Absolutely.

Jeff Manza

And I constantly see things in ways that I didn't or wouldn't have without that. But on the other hand, it is a very demanding enterprise that just takes over your life [inaudible].

Mary Anne Poatsy

Well, I think we're all better instructors too, because of our products.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Did you want to say something?

David Laibson

Yes. I've had the exact same experience — that it's been, not only a lot of work, but much, much more than I ever anticipated. But I agree. It does make one a better scientist or academician. Better teacher. It forces you to confront the material in a completely different way. And that has given me a lot of joy. And working with my co-authors has also been something that's been a lot of fun. So it's taken many times more hours than I thought, but it's also been more fun than I thought because of the collaboration — the ability to kind of bounce ideas off co-authors, and learn along the way. And that learning experience, I hadn't anticipated. So I thought I would just dump it all out of my brain and I'd be done. But instead, it was highly interactive. And I learned a lot along the way. And I became a better economist. And that's been really joyful.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

So, do we all agree that it's more than a job, though? We all agree it's more than hours? It's more than — it's a labor of love. It's a — you're trying to find that continuity. You're trying to be the best at what you can be. And it's not just putting words to a page. Do you...

Niva Tro

Yeah. Absolutely. Let me add, because we've been talking about hours, and I think hours are obviously a big part of it — how much time you put into it. But to me, I think there's three things that Pearson really did for me and helped me with my project. And these I think are key to the success of any project. It's first of all, vision. So there's got to be respect for the vision of the project. What is the overall vision? How is it going to change things? How is it different from what's out there? You know, how is it worth paying for? Right? So that's the first question. The second question then is, if the publisher agrees that there's a vision, then there's got to be resources. And without resources, we really can't do our job. And so, Pearson has provided the resources, I think, to do the best job I can possibly do. And I'm grateful for that. And then, thirdly, I think you need a talented team of people. And no author can do it on their own. And I'm sure that you all have experienced that. And at Pearson I've encountered very, very talented people that have taken my vision and have moved it forward. And I'm grateful for that as well.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

That's an excellent thought. Does anybody else want to chime in on, why did you choose Pearson? Why did you choose Pearson?

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Yeah. I would say — well, I have another thing to add to what Niva was saying, which has to do with the art program that goes with the textbooks, and how immensely important that is to student learning. And the resources and time and energy that gets put into that art manuscript. I really had no idea. Like he said — you know, you didn't know what you were signing up for. If you did, you may not have signed.

[Laughter]. But, that said, the art program, and the reviewing, and the rigorous, you know, reflection process that goes into that is substantial. Even, I remember the first time I was asked to select photos. You know, I had no idea, first of all, how expensive photos are. I think that's something, you know — you want a picture, a clinical picture, for example, and you're talking \$300 to license that picture, which gets into the resources thing. If you really want to show what students are going to need and what's relevant to their training, and you want that art program, it does take resources. And I think that's something that a lot of people underestimate.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Do you see a world in which the printed textbook is finally gone, and we have digital learning only? What do you think? [Laughter].

David Laibson

Yeah. Absolutely. I think we're on the edge of that world.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Okay.

David Laibson

We just see that there's a textbook that's been developed here that was digital first. And I see more and more students comfortable with that mode of inquiry. I think my generation isn't comfortable going fully digital. But I think today's 15-year-olds will be amazed if someone passes them a 15-pound tome and says, 'Take this home.'

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Right. Disappointed more like. Yeah.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Okay. Any other opinions?

Jeff Manza

I mean, I think the key here is that there's so much more in the digital learning environment that we can kind of convey through these materials. And I think that's ultimately, you know, where the print textbook of the past is eventually going to die, because of the superiority of the, you know, the pedagogical environment that you can create in a digital — with digital materials.

Eric Gaze

And they asked me to create materials that were also fully digital. And I thought it was important that we at least have a workbook for students — just to brainstorm. I mean, I think there really is something to pencil and paper in terms of just getting the thought process started. But in terms of what James [sic] was just saying. I mean, it is, it's like infinite content that you can put in the digital environment versus that static — the old-school textbook. And so that definitely is a huge win.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

You know, when I think about the future of educational publishing, you know, and I think about this question of, is the printed textbook going to go away? You know, I'm not sure that I, right now, know the answer to that. But what I do know is that content development will never go away. There will always have to be well-crafted, academically sound content that faculty can use in their classrooms, and that

students can use to study and to be successful in the course. So, will the printed text go away? Maybe. But what I do know is that there will always have to be great content for students to utilize.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

I think you're right. I think it takes thinkers, like all of us, to form a creation which turns out to be — whether it's a digital, or whatever format it is — it takes that creative thinking and that creative process to come up with a, some sort of continuous form of thought with which hopefully our students will ride with us, and come out the other end much better either way. How about anybody else?

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Well, I would agree with you. The printed textbook, I think, will go away. Just like fully face-to-face classes have been shifting toward online and hybrid curriculum. I mean, there's an analogous question there, right? Will the traditional face-to-face classroom ever go away? And I think in some ways it has. What is a traditional face-to-face classroom anymore? So, it only stands to reason that the content and materials that support those changing modalities would also evolve. And kids are using strictly digital now, too, for their course materials.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

So, let me ask you. Go ahead.

Niva Tro

I think the answer to that question partly depends on how we do our jobs — the people at this table. If the digital textbook is just a passive pdf file that students read like they would in a book, then the printed book will never go away, because the printed book is superior in that respect. But if the digital textbook becomes an interactive learning environment that is active, and really puts into play what we've learned from educational research, then the printed textbook will go away.

Mary Anne Poatsy

I totally agree.

Brooke Whisenhunt

And if we continue to ask that question and do the science. So, for me, it's a scientific question. *Should* the printed textbook go away? And that data's not there yet, and we have to keep developing materials, and comparing them, and doing the science behind which one leads to better outcomes in learning. And fine tuning our digital platforms in a way that leads to better learning over time.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Well, let me change channels with everybody for just a moment. And let me just ask you, 'cause we could talk about digital versus, you know, print forever. But what are your goals for your users? What are those actual goals? I know my goals. My goals are for, like I mentioned to you, for my students to finally learn the mathematics that, the way that I presented it to them. And they finally understand that that is a very friendly — come on, you talk about mathematics at a party, and you're the only one standing there. You're talking to yourself. So I want them to finally, to finally have us a generation where that doesn't happen. You know, you're not standing alone. And we don't have to worry about people being afraid of that language, which would lead to the chemistry, the economics, and everything else. So what is everyone else's goals?

Eric Gaze

Every teacher, really what we're trying to do, is just optimize student learning, right? I mean, we want them to study all of our disciplines. We want to empower our students. We want them to feel confident enough to go out in the world and sort of lead a life of widened freedom, right? The life of the mind is important.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

My ultimate goal is for my students to be lifelong learners. You know, when I think about students leaving my classroom, most likely they're going to change careers multiple times. They're probably going to be in a job that I could never even envision. And so if I don't teach them how to learn, I'm doing a disservice to them. So whether they remember accounting or not — that's important, but really my ultimate goal is to create students who love to learn, and who have critical thinking, and problem solving, and judgment skills. Because that, is what I believe, is going to take them in the long run.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

And you said something very important. Take what you have taught them, and expand it to beyond accounting, and to the rest of their lives. Anyone else?

Jeff Manza

For me, the biggest goal of our enterprise is to teach our students how to ask questions about the world around them, and how to do that throughout their lives so that nothing is taken for granted. That they question received wisdom, they question what they see in the media. And trying to give them the tools in one course, and hopefully other courses that they will take, so that when they leave college they will have, you know, that kind of mind that is determined to ask hard questions about the social world that they're living in.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Excellent.

Mary Anne Poatsy

And not to learn specifically — I mean they have to learn the content that we're teaching them. But to be able to — 'cause knowledge has changed, right? It's no longer he who or she who has the most facts in their head that can spew them out, because facts are available on our phones now. It's how do you take those facts, and apply them, and think critically about it. And so, you know, I think the platforms that we're using, the types of learning devices, and material — I think that's all important — trying to get the students to think critically.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Well, I also think that we're forgetting about another user, and that's our colleagues. You know, that's one of my goals, is to help other faculty teaching accounting be successful in their courses. You know, so I think about all the hours that it takes to go into the content. And how can I help someone else? Maybe a new faculty.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Oh, you just took the words out of my, yes.

Tracie Miller-Nobles

Or a seasoned faculty that's, you know, tired of teaching and wants a different approach in the classroom. You know, how can I help them?

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to go through those first five years we all did in the classroom? If we could save somebody a little time, that would be great. Go ahead.

David Laibson

I'm thinking about the instructor *and* the student. I want the student to have a personal transformation. I want them to see the world in a completely new light. I want them to take the tools that are provided when you first confront economics and suddenly understand the world differently. To see everything through this alternative lens, not to crowd out other lenses, but to give them a new way of understanding the world. It's sort of like you're in an optometrist's office and you've got the foggy ones and then they click — and all of a sudden you see clearly. That's the experience I want for the students. And of course, when students have that experience, it's fantastic for the instructor too. Because everyone is having this amazing moment that is transformational. The students love it. They take it as an experience in the classroom. They take it for the rest of their lives as a way of understanding what's going to happen later in their life. And then the instructor has this wonderful experience. Rather than dragging students through a curriculum that everyone hates, the instructor gets to be part of this transformational moment. So that's what I'm — that's what I'm looking for.

Brooke Whisenhunt

And I think for the instructor to — we were talking about time — so some of these tools and the way we're designing the learning environment saves the time for an instructor to do other things. So now I can sit with the student who is getting a D or an F, and spend time with them working through their problems in a way that I couldn't do before because I was grading those papers. And I just read this study recently. The number one predictor of success in a course was whether or not they thought they were cared about.

Mary Anne Poatsy

Oh. Interesting.

Brooke Whisenhunt

It wasn't — it wasn't about all these academic things. And so if I, as the instructor, can communicate care — if I have time to do that — that's actually a powerful thing. So if we can, as authors, design a way that instructors can give more care, I think that's a beautiful thing.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Read a little bit about mindset. Have you read about mindset? And, yes, fixed and growth mindset. That's very in right now.

Brooke Whisenhunt

Which proves that psychology actually does rule the world. Sorry, guys. [Laughter].

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Based on the mathematics needed to run the data. [Laughter].

Niva Tro

There are two simple words I'd like to add. And I think it summarizes some of what has been said, and that is that I want my students at the end of the day to be competent and passionate. So I want them not just to understand the 'what,' but the 'why.' And when they can get there, then you can have the kind of transformation that we're talking about here.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

And they'll be great math teachers one day. [Laughter].

Lourdes Norman-McKay

So my goal for my students. I'm training the healthcare team of tomorrow. And my goal is that they'll save lives.

Mary Anne Poatsy

No small task.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

Yeah. So, to do that, they have to be able to think critically and clinically. And it's taking things that would be basic science, and showing them how they relate to the clinical science. And applying that in a real-life scenario. And they have to be able to do it in a form that they'll be able to reproduce when they're under pressure. Because that's, you know, what's going to be their real-life work scenario. So mine is, I want to get at the basic science. I want to get at the clinical aspect. But I also want to give them that transformative experience so that they can see how it's relevant to what they're doing. It's not just a box to check — that it's much bigger than that. And I think ultimately, that is the training of the mind, the fostering of good habits of the mind, that will serve them through their lives.

Eric Gaze

You know, we often hear at commencement, the speaker will say something like, 'Follow your passion.' Like students all are sitting there with some passion, right, that they're ready to follow. And so, a huge part of what we do is almost provide them this training that you mentioned — learning how to learn, but helping them find a passion. And you're only going to be passionate about something if you have an engaging curriculum, and you have engaged faculty members who are able to use that curriculum.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Exactly. I think, Brooke, you said it best when you were talking about those letters. And a lot of them were from educators. Those that meant a lot to you were from educators. And that's, I don't know if that's a prime time in life to be affected, and brought to realization of what your life is about? But, don't you remember sometimes who affected you the most when you were growing up?

David Laibson

Yup. All teachers.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Yes. Teachers.

Lourdes Norman-McKay

And now our students too. I think our students affect us.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

Yes. Yes.

Brooke Whisenhunt

Yeah. It's not one direction. It's bidirectional.

Elayn Martin-Gay (moderator)

But remember, you are now being the one that they will remember. You know, it's topped around, and topsy turvy. And now they will remember you. And hopefully you will get that letter once.