Episode 3: Collaborative and Open Publishing Models with Apurva Ashok and Zoe Wake Hyde Transcript

[Theme music: "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org]

Josie Gray: Hello! Welcome to the Open Knowledge Spectrums podcast, which explores questions of epistemic justice, or knowledge equity, in the context of open education and considers different possibilities for making open education and open educational practices more equitable.

My name is Josie Gray, and I am your host. This podcast is my final project for my Masters of Design in Inclusive Design at OCAD University.

In this episode, I speak with Apurva Ashok and Zoe Wake Hyde about how collaborative, open models for publishing open educational resources can support more equitable and transparent publishing workflows. We also discuss the power of publishing and the importance of ensuring that that power is distributed and accessible.

Apurva Ashok is the project lead for the Rebus Community. She helps educational institutions build human capacity in OER publishing through professional development offerings, such as the Textbook Success Program. Apurva has studied literature and marketing at McGill University and completed the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University. Her experience ranges across academic publishing, media, social justice, and volunteerism. In 2020, Apurva received an Open Educational Award for Excellence, in recognition of her contributions to the field. She strongly believes in translating knowledge among communities and regions and in the value of greater critical thinking for all.

Zoe Wake Hyde worked in media research and academia in New Zealand before completing the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University. Having been somewhat radicalized by discovering the faults of traditional academic publishing, she is now focused on creating systems that support better, more equitable access to knowledge and learning. She is currently the project lead for Rebus Ink, a project exploring better ways to support researchers' workflows and connect them with the open ecosystem.

And with that, let's hear from Apurva and Zoe. Hope you enjoy.

[*Theme Music*]

Josie: To start would you each introduce yourself and say your name so that people can differentiate your voices.

Apurva Ashok: Hi, everyone. My name is Apurva Ashok. I am originally from Bangalore, India, but I'm currently based in Toronto, Canada. I want to mention I

am located on the traditional territories of many nations, including the Mississauga of the Credit, the Anishinabek, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and Wendat Peoples. And I want to acknowledge them and thank them for the privilege to live, work, and play here. And for allowing all of us to have a conversation today.

Zoe Wake Hyde: Hi, everyone. My name is Zoe Wake Hyde. I am from New Zealand originally. And realizing now I should have looked up my land acknowledgment for being based in Montreal currently. And certainly, I can tell you that I'm from the Waikato region in New Zealand and was immensely fortunate to grow up on the land of the Tainui and I can't think of anything else to say there. *[Laughs.]*

Zoe: Okay. So, clearly I was not prepared for this on the day, and I can't do a land acknowledgement off the top of my head... yet. But it's important, so I asked Josie if I could record one after the fact, still owning up to the fact that I got it wrong the first time around, but giving it the time and space it deserves. With that in mind, I want to acknowledge that on the day of the original recording and today, I am located in Tiohtià:ke, also known as Montreal, which is found on the unceded territories of the Haudenosaunee and Kanienʼkehá:ka First Nations. It is a place where I am immensely grateful to live and work. Now, my understanding of a land acknowledgement is that it is an opportunity for me to speak to and reflect on my relationship to the land I find myself on, but as an immigrant and a settler, I also feel strongly that I want to acknowledge the land I come from, to which I still have a really deep connection. So with that, I also acknowledge and extend my respect and gratitude to the Tainui iwi, who are the tangata whenua, or people of the land of the Waikato, my home in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Thank you for the chance to get this right. Lesson learned. And now, on with the show.

Josie: Could you both maybe give a bit of background about your professional background?

Apurva: Zoe, why don't you go ahead this time?

Zoe: *[Laughs]* Okay, absolutely. So, I took a long, winding path to where I am now, that from this perspective looks like it makes a lot of sense. So, since my undergrad back in New Zealand, I have worked in various roles related to higher education. So, I was a media researcher for a while, so I was analyzing media coverage of universities. I then worked in administration in a university as well, and ended up finding a real interest in academic publishing and set out to, you know, pursue the nice wood-paneled office in some cushy university press job, which I thought existed. And in doing my Masters of Publishing discovered that open research is really the place that I want to be. And I'm really interested in open monographs in particular, and then through that program ended up working in open education with the Rebus Foundation and Pressbooks. And so that was about.. close to five years ago now, and I've been very happily exploring the open space through a few different channels, up until today.

Josie: Thanks. Apurva?

Apurva: I have a similar background to Zoe's. I've also side-stepped from academia to publishing to open publishing. I have a background in English literature. I also completed the Master of Publishing program that Zoe just mentioned. And I've been working in open education for about four years now. I learnt a lot about commercial publishing during my master's degree. I was introduced, thanks to wonderful faculty in that program, to ideas around open pedagogy, open tools, open processes, and landed an internship at Rebus, where I now work. So, got into the field as an intern, worked hands-on with open publishing projects, and have stayed in the field ever since and continue to be more and more amazed by all the potential it has to change systems and education to make it more equitable and to really act more as a service than as an industry.

Josie: Right, absolutely. So, both of you got into open education through that publishing program, is that right?

Apurva: Mhmm.

Zoe: Yep.

Josie: Oh cool. I didn't quite realize that. I knew you had both done that publishing program, but I didn't realize that was directly your tie to open education.

Zoe: It's a great funnel. *[Laughter]* We try to bring as many through as we can. There have been others, too, from that program who we've worked with in open ed.

Josie: This wasn’t a question I had on the list, but something I thought about after. I was kind of wondering with your - both of your - backgrounds, both of your educations in publishing, I was wondering like what part of that education did you find useful as you kind of transitioned into more open education? And where did you have to kind of imagine differently?

Apurva: I think for me, one of the most useful pieces was just really understanding the ins and outs of what it takes to make a book. I think so much of the labour that goes into the work tends to happen behind a curtain. You sort of hand someone a manuscript if you're an academic and then *bam* out comes a book in many different formats and forms. So, the program really broke down the various stages of the process, and the number of different hands that are involved into making this work. So, with open education, the shift for me was sort of seeing how this could work in maybe a non-profit sense, in a non-commercial sense, and finding ways to again match how pieces of the trade publishing world could map out differently in an open publishing context.

Zoe: Yeah, I really echo that. So much happens behind the curtain. And there's real power in it. And that's another thing I took away from my time in MPub was understanding the power of publishing. It is an incredibly important industry, cultural phenomenon... the technologies involved. It's pretty immense in terms of

its impact on how we live our lives when you think of publishing as making anything public, right. You can use quite an expansive definition. And so, the combination of understanding its power and understanding how it can be done so that you can then translate those to the wider world outside of the publishing industry, that there is power in the process of publishing, that should be owned by everybody, that should be accessible to everybody. That's really one of the things I've brought through into my work in open education, is that this is something that anybody can do. We all do it all the time in different ways. So how can we then support and structure that a little bit so that publishing can be done by people who want to have that impact on the world?

Josie: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I was really looking forward to talking with you both because you have that background in publishing, which I am extremely jealous of. I feel like in my own work, I'm kind of trying to do publishing and not really sure of what I'm doing, but...[laughs]

Apurva: And I'll hold on to what Zoe said where you've probably been doing it all along without necessarily calling it publishing. I know you've contributed chapters as part of your masters cohort to a book that you've published on Pressbooks and were using that term officially, and that counts as part of the work. Producing a series like this one counts as part of the work.

Josie: *[Laughs]* Right, yeah.

Zoe: Absolutely. Yeah, it has really felt like we're in this space in between a lot of different things, and that by trying to do the work of publishing in a way that isn't about us creating the content and publishing the books, but supporting everybody to do publishing, there are so many spaces where I feel on the edges. And Apurva, I'm curious if you feel this too. You know, when I'm in the open access space, I am a publisher, but not. When I'm in the open education space, I'm not a publisher, but I am. And when I'm around other publishers, I'm something else entirely different from them again. It's a really exciting and interesting space, but it does kind of get at that - yeah there's a bit of - kind of mystery to where we fit in all of it, because publishing has traditionally been so structured, so centred in the industry. And then people on the, you know, outside of that walled garden haven't seen themselves in it, haven't seen themselves as part of publishing. They might be authors or writing, but seeing themselves as publishers I don't think comes very naturally to people.

Apurva: No, folks don't, and I'll say that, you know with you and I, Zoe, having that interdisciplinary lens to this field or these sets of fields, if we're looking at all of them, can be very valuable because we're sort of challenging those notions of, are you inside that elite sphere, who was able to - or unable to publish something, or are you watching from the outsides. I think we're really trying to blur those margins and really make it more of a self-determining activity, rather than someone looking at a checklist and saying, “Well do I meet all of these criteria or not.”

Zoe: Right, absolutely. Those boundaries are barriers, and we're all about breaking down barriers, yeah.

Josie: Yeah, Absolutely. I think that's a good transition to talking about what the Rebus Community is. Could you maybe give listeners kind of an overview of the Rebus Community?

Apurva: Sure thing. So, the Rebus Community is a non-profit organization. And really what we're trying to do is to build human capacity. We're trying to help people through the OER Publishing process, specifically with some professional development programs. We offer in depth courses, we offer webinar series for instructors, faculty, librarians, and other kinds of institutional leaders or even students. And really our goal is to try to de-mystify the open publishing process, encourage OER adoption, support faculty to author new content, introduce students to affordable, high-quality materials. And also make connections between people. We're trying to build a global OER community and give them the foundational skills to be able to carry on this work in future. And maybe Zoe can speak to sort of the larger pieces of this puzzle, which is about re-imagining the publishing landscape.

Zoe: [*Laughs*] Right. Okay, good. Glad I have something else to say because you explained the Rubus Community beautifully. Yeah, we have with this ... kind of a parent organization, which is the Rebus Foundation. And the mission there is to re-imagine the publishing ecosystem on open principles. So, we all work with the belief that by applying open principles to every part of the publishing system - or publishing systems - we can make them more expansive, more inclusive, more radical, more cooperative. There's so much potential when you take an open approach to these things. Now, I always view open as a tool. There are other ways to achieve the kinds of goals we have for the publishing ecosystem, but openness is a really strong one. And so, the work that's happening in Rebus Community is very much within that broader context, understanding how one kind of publishing can be done really differently and with the values of open - as you know, I think the open education community does a great job of defining - built right into the foundations of that publishing. And it's also feeding into this wider idea of, how do we do publishing across the board, throughout education, academia, research spaces, anywhere where it's about the creation and sharing of knowledge. It gives us an opportunity to think about those differently as well. Connect to them, inspire them, all sorts of kinds of things that feed off in lots of directions. And certainly, is really at the forefront of rethinking quite a fundamental process, being the publishing of educational materials, in the name of also thinking about how can we publish everything differently?

Josie: Mhmm. Apurva could you talk a little bit about how openness shows up in kind of like the day-to-day practices in the Rebus Community and the technologies that you use?

Apurva: Sure thing. We're always conscious of the fact that, you know, we're working here in Toronto, Zoe's in Montreal, you're in Victoria. We're working in

Canada, but there are a number of open education practitioners around the world. So very simply we want to begin by having a forum or a conversational space where people could connect, regardless of their time zones or regions. And one of the main pieces, I guess, of the Rebus Community infrastructure is our community forum platform, where people can ask and answer questions, they can post calls for contributions on projects. Really the idea is to be transparent about what folks are working on, to learn from one another, to help each other out, to ensure that the work doesn't take place in silos, to ensure that our efforts aren't being duplicated. And we also use other tools for publishing our resources as well, and I might actually pass this over to Zoe to talk a little bit about Pressbooks, which happens to be the Rebus Community's prefered tool for publishing open texts.

Zoe: Absolutely. So I got my start with Pressbooks, so it has a special place in my heart. *[Laughs]*. So Pressbooks is an open-source platform for publishing all kinds of materials, but typically open education materials is where it's largely used. And so, it's built on top of WordPress, which is an open-source system itself and has a very large open-source ecosystem, and through the customizations built to Pressbooks, it is a very simple but very powerful tool for publishing any kind of content. You know, back to my early days with Pressbooks, it was incredible to see the uptake in the open education community, and it really kind of lit a fire to see where it could go because it was exactly the purpose of having this tool that is - you know, as we've been talking about - accessible to more people, that puts more kind of power and control on their own publishing and to hands of many more people. So, it's grown and grown from there and has, you know, its own community of open-source users, of contributors, and is certainly well connected into the open education ecosystem to be seeking to contribute what it can as a tool that performs a pretty fundamental function which is, how do you get your content out there?

Josie: Mhmm, yeah. I've worked with Pressbooks since I got into open education - so four and a half years ago, I think - and it's incredible how much the tool has changed and grown, just in that short period of time. It's honestly phenomenal. And with the new Pressbooks Directory and seeing how that allows for more collaboration and connection and sharing, bringing all of those different Pressbooks books that are out there in existence now. It's been... really lovely to see.

Apurva: Yeah, it's exciting to see what companies and organizations can do when they sort of focus on the people, and the needs of the people, and really respond directly those rather than sort of chasing the profit dollar.

Josie: Right. Yeah. It's pretty easy to sell people on Pressbooks, *[laughter]* when they see how nice it can look with not too much effort. So, to kind of shift the conversation a bit, how do you think about equity and justice in the context of open education, generally?

Zoe: To me it's the absolute fundamental reason why we do this work. Again, open is a tool to achieve something, and something that I think that we're seeking to achieve in the education space is equity and justice. If tomorrow, openness stopped

serving that purpose, you know, certainly me, and I think this is likely true for many, if openness isn't a thing helping us achieve that, we would seek out the thing that would help us achieve it, rather than sticking with openness. You know, I love the open space, I love what's possible, I really believe in it. The reason I believe in it is because it's giving to this goal of equity and justice in education and/or in research and whatever place you want to apply those principles. It's that fundamental.

Apurva: Yeah, I agree. I think it informs every aspect of the work, every aspect of decision making. It's the undercurrent through all of our conversations and actions. And I know that open education has - you know, when we talk about it more generally - the potential to make content more inclusive for learners, to reduce opportunity gaps. But I do want to flag that there needs to be intentional action in order to make this happen. That's why, sort of having it at the core, as Zoe was describing, is so important. And you know, when we've mentioned the word context, it's helpful to remember that we're practitioners in Canada. I'm someone who's from South Asia and the product of a very different education system. So, I'm always conscious of the ways in which we're working here, the other models for openness that apply to other regions, to people who might be working in non-English languages as well. And I think that an equitable and just model for open education is one that is also mindful of these and finding ways to integrate with this, rather than just being one model to supplant the rest. Because we know from history that that doesn't work well.

Josie: Yeah, a bit motivation for me doing this podcast, was kind of this realization in the work that I do in open education - that's not a new realization - but just like examples that I found of open resources being created that were not inclusive, that had racist content and things like that. And kind of recognizing that, okay, we need to be more intentional here, like we can't just create open educational resources with no attention to the other ways that exclusion can come into those resources.

Zoe: Yeah, I've been reflecting a little recently on my use of the term “open” because I think I hang a lot on “open” and “open” doesn't necessarily mean inclusive/accessible. There's so much more that I think we need to call out more explicitly, to make sure that the content is open *and* there’s a gap there right now. I think “ethical” maybe gets at some of it, but I've been toying with whether there is more language needed to capture this focus on equity and justice, alongside, or as well as, or very closely integrated with “openness.” But sometimes it feels like there's a kernel of something there that we don't capture when we just use the language of open education.

Apurva: I think that I mean that the danger of labels is a pitfall that we fall into often, but I think it's also important for us to acknowledge that struggle because, you know, if we do land on whatever that second adjective is to describe this process, it's very likely that our needs could change five years from now, and those labels and terms would also need to change. So, to sort of acknowledge that this

reflection and retrospection and thinking through is a part of figuring out the best way to think about the work, approach the work, do the work, and create those resources, is critical.

Josie: Mhmm. To kind of bring it back to publishing, what are some equity and ethical considerations that you think are important for people working on the kind of the publication or the project management side of OER projects.

Apurva: Oh, I have so many.

Josie: Let's hear them!

[Laughter]

Apurva: I'd say the big one for me that I've learnt is, you know, this idea of a model learner or a sort of single way or process by which people learn, doesn't really exist. So, I always think at the start of every project, one of the big things to do as a team is to map out the context in which you're working, the people for whom you're creating these resources, and seek out and try to understand what their needs and requirements are. What are the best ways in which they learn? Bring those people into your creation teams from day zero, we like to think about it. Co-create, collaborate with them, and plan for the time and work that it takes to make accessible, inclusive, equitable resources, whether it's in terms of the content, whether it's in terms of the formats in which those resources are available, or just in terms of team. You know, it takes a lot of time to bring someone who might be completely new to the world of publishing and introduce them to concepts within the field. I have more, but I will let Zoe jump in and share all of her wisdom as well.

Zoe: I just want to hear all of yours [*laughs*]. I'll link a little bit of that and build on it. I think there really needs to be a conscious effort from day one to think through the implications of what creating a project together will look like, and then how it's going to be used in the world and that's both why students, learners, and also by people who might be adapting, remixing, and building forward. And there is often I think a risk that there's so much that you're learning about publishing itself and how to go through practical steps of bringing people together and writing the content and editing it and getting it out there, it's really important to also take the time to be very explicit about things, like Apurva was just saying, around the context. And there’s so much there that gets assumed that can get, you know, you can get distracted from it because you're facing the very practical things. So I would really encourage people who are encountering this work to set aside dedicated time up front, seek out resources that support you to identify what questions you need to answer from day zero. There may be things that you haven't thought about thinking about yet, and so it's a question of being very deliberate and building in upfront the kinds of structures, changes, patterns, interactions, you know. There's so much in there that needs to be thought through with this lens of equity.

Apurva: Being flexible and adaptable as well, because, as you said Zoe, there are things that you might not know to think about at day zero. They might only crop up at day 260.

Zoe: Right.

Apurva: So you need to be adaptable in order to adjust and respond.

Zoe: Mhmm.

Apurva: And as we're sort of gesturing towards the future and sort of the time that these projects take, one thing that I've had to learn is letting go of what I think is sort of the finish line for a product. I've learnt that with open education resources especially, you have to see your resource in action, in use, if it's in a classroom, or a lab, or whatever environment that you've designed for it, and see how it plays out in the hands of instructors and learners, and then revise it to make sure it works better, it functions better. So, I think that's when open publishing comes hand-in-hand with open pedagogy or other kinds of open educational practices. It's sort of the stepping stone to another way of thinking about teaching and learning more generally. And you know, you don't need to consider all of that when you're starting out an open publishing project or managing an OER project. But to know that those are the paths it could take you on is helpful. And I find, having been on those paths, it’s very rewarding.

Josie: Yeah. That's such a good point. And I think in the context that I work in, where we're creating these resources and then we want them to get into the open textbook collection. Which is supposed to be this static kind of copy of the book that's not supposed to change. And then it doesn't ever get changed. And like, there's a bit of a... a disconnect in there that I think... me and other people at BCcampus need to think about. *[Laughs].*

Zoe: It's a very real challenge and this is where you run into some of the structures of publishing aren't designed for this kind of content

Josie: Mhmm.

Zoe: This comes up time and time again. If you want to have a static repository of content, it's essentially a library, right? Library books are done. They aren't evolving, they aren't changing, they aren't being revised, they-- you know, or it's happening over a very, very long period of time. So, this is not a BCcampus problem *[laughter]*. it's certainly something I encourage you to explore and figure out. But, you know, we've run into that time and time again at Rebus Community is thinking through, you know, when you run up against a traditional publishing structure, whether it is something like, should we have ISBN's for our books? Or you know, how do you start an editing process when maybe half of the content isn't finished yet because it's going to be done over a long period of time? So, I don't know if this is a take heart moment, but certainly this is, you know, when you're trying to rethink how publishing happens, you are going to run up against pre-

existing structures that just don't work for this kind of content. And there's a real excitement in that. It's also a real challenge in terms of figuring out how to navigate through it and keep that balance of doing what you need to to meet certain standards or whatever that might be expected of you. And also then push back and say, well why is it done like that? And how can we do it differently?

Josie: Mhmm. Yeah, I think it's a challenge, especially with a lot of the advocacy. We're kind of-- A lot of the time, we're trying to just get instructors to adopt an open textbook. And if it looks more like a textbook that they're used to, they're more likely to feel comfortable doing that. And it's not going to change on them, and they-- you know, it's dealing with those expectations, but also trying to allow for things that are different, like things that aren't "textbooks" as we maybe traditionally understand them.

Zoe: I think I also would like to bring up thinking about ethical considerations in publishing. And this is one where I don't have easy answers, but I think it's incredibly important to acknowledge the labour that goes into these projects. It's enormous. Over, you know, the past several years of working in open education, I've just seen hours and hours and years and years of people's commitment to this work. And it's truly a thing to behold. It has given me so much hope and heart, *and* there's this unresolved question of, how can we keep asking people to do all this work without adequately compensating them or rewarding them? And you know, the kind of standard reward is compensation, and you know... So, no easy answers, but I think if you are asking labour of people, if you are engaging them in this way, and certainly if you, yourself, are taking on a side project or something that's kind of feeling like a passion project to commit to this, there's a wealth of resources around how to kind of manage that and be a good steward of these projects, and also those of us who are thinking structurally about open education publishing have to constantly be reflecting on and grappling with and exploring how we can better reward the people who are giving their time to this.

Apurva: And I'll say financially compensate them for their work, but also build in a recognition process into our systems. So, I know in B.C. there has been some advancement with tenure and promotion policies. I know there are other institutions and universities that are acknowledging the labour involved in creating open educational resources, adopting them, adapting them, or teaching with them, and rewarding instructors in the same way they would if they were publishing a traditional monograph with a university press. So, I think... Yeah, thinking intentionally about those structures is useful and I will flag, you know, if we're looking at the diversity of the open education field right now, we can do a lot better. And that's really because there's a privilege in who has the time to volunteer their skills and expertise on these projects and who cannot. And this takes us back to Zoe's point about funding and compensation. If this is going to be a sustainable movement, if this is going to be the norm twenty years from now.

Josie: Mhmm. Do you think that the collaborative model used by Rebus is like one strategy for addressing that labour? Being able to kind of take a more crowd-sourcing, collaborative, distributed approach?

Apurva: I think it's one way to do it. I think there are ways it could improve. You know, I want to acknowledge that a lot of the projects that we work with have been able to get this far because of grants provided by their institution. The value that I see in the Rebus approach really is about the transparency and sort of, public approach to the work. The explicit welcoming of people who might not traditionally be involved in these processes to come join, and that could be anywhere from students, but to designers, or filmmakers, or people in other industries or walks of life. We try to build in time for community conversation, make sure that teams are as central the story of the resource as just the content or the gap that they're filling is. You know, we try as much as possible to value marginalized voices, and just exposing people through this process, exposing people through the work, and exposing them to a new way of creating content, publishing content, that *is* more inclusive that does have community at the core and the heart, can in itself be a step towards that more sustainable future. But I would love to see more investment in OER from different systems, not just from foundations who we've been privileged to partner with and work with. So, I think ours is a start but we have a long way we could go.

Zoe: Yeah, with rose-coloured glasses on a little bit, something I hope that the transparency that the Rubus Community process offers as well is visibility on the work it takes to do this work.

Josie: Right.

Zoe: And going back to again that idea of publishing being something that is not typical understood or just visible to most people. I think that the approach that the Rebus Community undertakes and encourages and facilitates shows what it looks like to do this work. And so my hope is that by having that out there, everybody who's invested in the success of the open education movement can see a bit more about what it's going to take to achieve sustainability.

Josie: Yeah, absolutely. Where do you see the value in these community and collaborative approaches to OER publishing?

Apurva: Again, it feels like all along the way. Collaborative models, and I know specifically when we're explaining the importance of teams and people to the projects we work with, we extremely stress on the fact that diverse teams really do produce more equitable resources. And this is not just me saying it as someone who's a person of colour and who is in this space. But really, the research shows us that working with people who don't have the same backgrounds, skills, or experiences as you do, forces you to think through challenges or questions from different perspectives. And it's in that moment of communication and conversation with someone else who is really coming at it with different needs that you're also

exposed to something new. And you realize how your resource might need to be modified to also work for that person, and how you're not just building for someone who looks and works and exactly like yourself, but you're really trying to build something that is a little more modular and flexible and can be picked up and used by more people. You know, it's easy for us to sort of live and operate in a bubble, but once the bubble bursts and you see that there are folks that have different needs and operate in different contexts and different regions, that's when you also realize that a problem exists that you hadn't been aware of before.

Josie: I was wondering if you could share a little bit about, like, what does it look like to build community and to build teams like that.

Apurva: It takes a lot of, again, intentional work. Some of the things that we have learnt to do over time is to really let it be known that that is what we're trying to do. We are trying to build a representative team. We're trying to involve people in this process who might not have previously been invited to work here. I think it's about reminding people that they can make contributions that can be as big and critical to the project or very small but still just as important and critical. It's understanding that folks have many pathways into doing this work and those pathways come with valuable contributions. And Zoe I know you've been part of many collaborative projects, so I'm curious about how you felt your experience was like.

Zoe: Yeah. Yeah, you know, in some of the projects where I think we've seen the most incredible community building, there's a little bit of magic in it that I think comes from shared belief and a shared enjoyment in the work. That there's a belief that what you're doing is important, and that you're all in it together. That kind of community spirit has evolved in, you know, several of the projects I worked closely with. And I think in some ways - I've always found it a little difficult to articulate exactly where that comes from but again - I think it comes down to shared intention and, you know, that kind of buying in to, this is a really valuable use of your time and something to do together. And that there's an openness to other people being a part of that too. It doesn't have to come from, say, you know, I've seen maybe projects start with collaborators who have known each other for a little while. They're kind of maybe, one, two, three of them, and then by being open to others buying in, that's grown and grown and grown to, you know, these incredible communities full of lots of different people who then bring their perspectives and really influence - really, really, substantially influence - the direction of the project,. I think that's critical to say. And as Apurva was saying this, I mean there's value in that. Yeah, that's certainly a pattern I've seen a little bit. There's a spark that comes from that.

Apurva: Yeah. In addition to the motivation, I'll say something that we do with a lot of our projects, in that initial project-scoping phase when they're sort of framing and trying to conceptualize what the project is going to look like, we ask them to work as a team to list out what we call their “measures of success.” And you know,

for most projects it's going to be, "I want to get this project done. I want it to be published or complete." But we really encourage them to sort of think beyond that. What does success look like for them? Is it connecting with "x" number of practitioners in their field or in related fields and bring them to be part of the project? Is it working and trialing this resource out with students and getting their feedback? Are there other pedagogical models that they'd like to explore through the creation of this resource? There can be many ways to define success on a project, and for most of them, I will say, it boils down to connecting with people, making sure that this resource has an impact on various groups of learners that they've identified. And it's not always just getting to that finish line. But sort of the means to this larger end, which is changing the field for instance, replacing a commercial textbook that's saving students money, and coming up with a really new way of engaging with students.

Zoe: And enjoying working together, too. *[Laughter*]

Apurva: Enjoying that, yeah. I will say that with the textbook success program, which is sort of a yearlong professional development course that I facilitate, a lot of my end of year evaluations really highlight the importance of the cohort model. They're all working on different projects and different disciplines in different stages in different regions, but they come together and connect frequently and regularly on-- and just discuss the work that they're doing. And it's sort of just that act of being able to have a shared space where you can talk about this work because you know, going back to what Zoe said in her introduction, it spans so many different areas and disciplines and industries, not just publishing. And for folks to come together and identify that they're not alone in this work, that they're also not alone in some of the struggles. You know, if you have writers block or if you don't quite know how to figure out this open tool that you're using, you can share those frustrations or worries with others in the group and find solace and comfort in the fact that people have been there before, or even if not, that they're there to support you through that. And that's where really the value of the community lies. And for us as well to be able to have this conversation together, as people who have worked in this field in different ways, but to be able to share our learnings is wonderful.

Josie: Yeah, absolutely. Super valuable to be able to connect with people and to commiserate or celebrate *[laughter]*, you know, it's very, very, valuable. What are some of the challenges that you've encountered, trying to build community?

Apurva: A big one that comes to mind for me is pulling people out of the entrenched tools and workflows that they have been used to, especially for folks who have been involved in academia, and been using particular systems and ways of going about their work for decades. It can be tough to break the habit and have them test out a new space or a new way of communicating and doing things. And sort of getting everyone to be able to not only, you know, have an account on the

same platform, but to really be using it fruitfully is the biggest challenge. In addition to obviously finding the funding to compensate everyone fairly.

Zoe: Yeah. I second both of those. The first thing that came to my mind was email, which is a little reductive. But certainly, when the activity that's happening on a project ends up being a bit kind of hidden away, that just sometimes we've seen that kind of lead to... a lack of pickup and progress and excitement. And that's not to say that that doesn't work for some people. I'm completely sure that some people are creating excellent projects, and they're doing all of their communication via email. But occasionally people do get stuck in those patterns. And that can kind of just close off a couple of possibilities here and there that can then snowball a little bit into some challenges for the project, if there isn't kind of a really strong driver kind of making sure that it's all moving forward. Which I think is common to any kind of project. That sometimes it just doesn't quite take off in the way you want to, it becomes a little more of a slog.

Josie: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. What about successes?

Zoe: Again, I go back to like there's a little pixie dust sometimes like, you know *[laughter]*. This is the least useful information in the world, I'm sure. But I mean this is why we've worked to kind of profile and talk to the people who have had amazingly successful projects. I'm thinking of the Introduction to Philosophy, OER Course Markings, Blueprint for Success. There are some examples where there's just been magic, and it's incredible to behold. So, if there are resources associated with this podcast, we can share some of the case studies and things that have tried to pull out what makes those so successful. There's just kind of a buzz you get sometimes, but, you know, Apurva's much closer to it than I am these days, so I'm sure she has something more practical [*laughs*].

Apurva: Well, I was going to say it's one we've already discussed before. For me the big successes are just seeing the impact of groups and cohorts working together. That's definitely been my biggest take away. I know 2020 being the year that it was, I would often go into my OER project sessions and leave feeling reenergized, revitalized, rejuvenated, because I've just been able to go in and talk to people who are doing this work very informally and casually, for about an hour and a half. And there's just real value in establishing those kinds of professional relationships with people. And value that I've seen others also echo and sort of highlight and hold dear to their selves as well. I think the big successes again, are not just in creating the resources, but creating the communities that exist around those resources. Because that's really the way that we can change some of the systems in which we're currently trying to operate.

Zoe: I completely agree with it. I'll try to come to something a little more practical as well. I think openness to opportunity, I think we've seen go far as well. That being open to the possibility of someone coming to you with an idea that you never thought of. And to me, this is-- I think this is at the heart of why I love, you know, open licenses, open content, generally. You don't know what someone else is going

to do with the work that you've started. And I think there have been cases where we've seen a project that has started along a path--and been able to continue along that path, and kind of achieve what it set out to--and some other, you know, parallel path has sprouted out with someone doing translation, or they're creating an audiobook, or something that you wouldn't have envisioned from the start. And the projects who are open to and positioned to kind of bring that work in and really incorporate it as part of the project at large, we've seen some amazing kind of results from that.

Apurva: Yeah, we talked about pathways in, and this is sort of pathways out, and the many shapes and forms these documents can take. I've seen that with people too, they come in with the intention of publishing a book and they leave with a whole new understanding of how they could teach. And they're sort of taking so much out of a process that really was telling them the A to Z of the publishing process, but through those interactions with people and through thinking about other ways of doing things, are leaving as changed people with new perspectives, and I think that's a big success.

Josie: Absolutely. The final question is a very big question, but where do you see the potential for open publishing practices to disrupt exclusionary and oppressive systems and structures in education?

Apurva: Oh wow, another big question to close us out. *[Laughter]* I always come back to the fact that open publishing, and our way of approaching it in particular, is people and human centric. So, as I said before, we're really not focused on raking in every last dollar, but rather we're focusing the needs of learners, and instructors, and staff, and the key players in the space, the stakeholders in this space. So, the fact that this type of process can be co-created with community, with people at the core, and create models that are owned by us all, that can be adapted by us all if we need it to be, I think there's value in that. You know the more I think about it for me, and this is my personal approach to open education--education more generally--I really see education as a human right. It is as essential as food, shelter, water, health care. And it's what makes the world turn in so many ways. It's what shapes us as people. It's what shapes us as members of society. And therefore, it's so important that the system itself be created by the people, be used by the people. I think the biggest potential is for us all is to align towards those centres as people and not just money. And see the wonders that education could do if it's really reimagined as a service industry.

Zoe: Awesome. I love hearing you talk about that, Apurva. For me, I come back to the power of publishing. So, when you think about particularly educational resources someone by publishing--I'll use textbook, but that's a shorthand for lots of things--by publishing a textbook, you're putting a stake in the ground saying, "This thing is worth knowing." And so who decides what is worth knowing? Who can access what is worth knowing? Who can create the communication that says this is worth knowing? All of these things are so incredibly powerful and so that power

must be shared and distributed. Any concentration of that power is massively damaging to the world on any level. You know, fundamentally, access to knowledge, access to the creation of knowledge, participation in the creation of knowledge, is a human right as well, to kind of echo what Apurva was saying. And so, when you believe in the power of knowledge, in all the ways people can interact with it, you have to work to ensure that it is not being used to cause harm, that it is not incidentally causing harm, and that it is as much owned by everybody who can and should be participating and benefitting from it, as possible. Again, that's kind of the fundamental thing for me with publishing broadly. And in the education context, that means publishing of educational content has to be open and equitable, and everybody should have ownership of the systems to create their own knowledge, to create all the different forms of knowledge, the different ways of knowing. There's just a myriad of different possibilities in the world that have to be supported by these systems, or they aren't doing their job as far as I'm concerned.

[Theme Music]

Josie: You can learn about the Rebus Community and explore their platform at about.rebus.community. And Rebus is spelled R-E-B-U-S. If you are interested in learning more about collaborative and open publishing models and practices, you should check out two incredible resources created by the Rebus Community, including *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students* and *The Rebus Guide to Publishing Open Textbooks (So Far)*. You can also follow the Rebus Community on Twitter at @RebusCommunity. You can connect with Apurva on LinkedIn. Her profile URL is LinkedIn.com/in/ApurvaAshok. And you can follow Zoe on twitter at @ZWHNZ.

You can learn more about this podcast at knowledgespectrums.opened.ca. On the website, you can find all episodes and transcripts, along with many other resources and information related to this project. You can connect with me on Twitter @josiea_g and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #OKSPodcast.

The theme song is "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org and shared under a Creative Commons Attribution License.

I record this podcast on the traditional and unceded territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən Peoples, including the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, and the lands of the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples. I am very grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and learn on these lands.

This has been Open Knowledge Spectrums Podcast. Thanks for listening.

—End of Episode—