Transcript

Derek Bruff: [0:00] This as leading lines. I'm Derek Bruff. A few years ago, I was running late to attend to keynote at my professional conference. So, I grabbed the first seat near the back of the room that was available to me. It was a great keynote, so I took out my laptop and started tweeting about it as I do others at the conference, we're tweeting about it too, and I soon realized that one of those others was actually sitting right next to me. I had quite randomly chosen a seat next to Janae Cohn, who was at that time an Academic Technology Specialist in the Writing and Rhetoric program at Stanford University. I introduce myself quietly since the keynote was still happening. And we chatted for a bit after the talk. I learned that Janae had a very healthy interest in digital reading. That is the ways that reading on smartphones, tablets and laptops shapes our understanding of and experiences with reading. I was fascinated and made sure to stay in touch with today, mostly through Twitter. Flash forward to 2021. Today is now the Director of Academic Technology at California State University at Sacramento, and the author of a new book on digital reading from West Virginia University Press. The book is called Skim, Dive, Surface: Teaching Digital Reading. It's a fantastic book that takes a look at reading from historical, emotional, and cognitive science perspectives and presents a digital reading framework that instructors can use to promote deep reading practices with their students. It's full of very practical advice on teaching digital reading, the examples of classroom activities and digital assignments designed to foster digital literacies. I had the chance to talk with Janae via Zoom about her new book recently, and I'm excited to share our conversation here on the podcast. We talk about the emotional connections people have with print books, the ways that reading on a screen is different from reading on a page, ways to help students develop better reading practices, and the joy of writing books in coffee shops. Thanks for spending some time with us today. Today, I was very excited to get your book in the mail the other week. Congratulations on the, on the publication. That's a that's a pretty awesome thing. **Jenae Cohn: [2:20]** Thank you so much. I'm so glad you're excited to get the book. I was excited to think it out. And thanks for having me as part of this conversation today. **Derek: [2:28]** Sure. Yeah, happy to have you and happy to welcome you to the West Virginia University Press Author Family fan club to be in life.

Jenae: [2:36] It is! I'm enjoying it. I don't know if it's membership or participation. It's a nice crew. I'm really honored to be in such good company. **Derek: [2:45]** Yeah. Yeah, they are sharp people, plus me. So, let me start with a question. I've been asking a lot of guests lately. Can you tell us about a time when you realized you wanted to be an educator?

Jenae: [3:05] Yes. I can remember the first time I really thought about being educator was when I was in college, and I had a job as a composition tutor in our Peer Learning Center. And in one of our training and professional development sessions, we discussed scholarship from teaching and learning. We discuss scholarship for murder can composition. And we talked about the idea of learning as a conversation at learning as collaborative. And that was the first time in my college life that I thought of learning as being something where you'd work together with other people and go on kind of a journey together, so to speak. And so, that was really compelling to me to think about the ways that you could learn with other people. How learning wasn't just about kind of individual genius or having certain spark a talent, but really kind of getting to work through with someone an idea or a thought or a concept. And honestly, it was being a writing tutor that made me go and get a PhD in English because I just thought I would like to be a writing tutor forever. I didn't exactly turn out that way, but I still give a lot of credit to things that I learned from being a peer tutor in college for a lot of pedagogical foundation I have today. **Derek: [4:20]** Yeah. Yeah, that's great. I mean, my story is a little bit similar except I was tutoring calculus in college. **Jenae: [4:26]** We might've been friends. Our learning center had both writing people and math people all in the same building. So, we collaborated a lot. It was a pretty progressive parallel. **Derek: [4:37]** It is, it's like having dogs and cats in the same house. Like its potential troubles. **Jenae: [4:41]** They're all domesticated creatures. So as long as you kind of set up the appropriate food bowls and blankets. I don't know, my metaphors breaking down the same kind of species. There's convergence, there's things in common that you can find it could be really productive. You could have a whole adoption facility. **Derek: [5:05]** Yeah. Well, and I love your piece about, you know, the conversation, right? And how this experience is what a writing tutor helped you can see learning as a conversation. And I think that connects well to some of what you talk about in your book. Before you get your book, I want to share one piece of writing that I wrote years ago. **Jenae [5:24]** Great!

Derek: [5:25] Just as a bit of context. So, I wrote this tongue in cheek blog post where I pretended, basically I had only experienced digital reading technologies in my life and I had, I was just now as an adult encountering a book, like an actual print book. And I wrote this

product review where I was encountering this book for the first time and I was a little disappointed at its lack of features, right? So, you can't search. If you want to, like annotate something, you have to like write something in a tiny little margin, like what's the point of that? And you can't easily screenshot something and share it on Twitter. So, like this just seems like some technology that doesn't have much potential. And I thought my post was pretty funny. I don't know if other people did but I wrote it because this was, I don't know, maybe ten years ago. And e-readers, we're really kind of taking the world by storm. And I heard all of these laments from people about kind of the end of the book. And they were all, they tended to be very romantic. Like I just love the smell of an old book as I flip through the pages or I just can't take an e-reader to the pool side and read there, it might get wet, right? Like this is where I like to read my novels. **Jenae: [6:38]** Yeah. And so, so there was a sentiment in the air that digital reading would never compare to analog reading. **Jenae [6:45]** Yes. And I'm wondering, given your work in this area, do you still hear that sentiment? And if so, how do you, how do you respond to those sentiments given your, your work on digital reading? **Jenae [6:58]** Thank you. I love that story. It really captures so many of the tension kind of at the heart of this conversation. So I hear all the time people make those kinds of claims. And by people, I mean students, faculty, staff, friends, family. And those romanticized comparisons, the kind of affective feeling-based associations we might have with print are so strong. And I think, or affective associations with computers and digital technologies are a lot less affectionate. You know, even though we take our phones to bed with us, some people literally put them under their pillows or on their bedside. That our phones literally go with us everywhere. They're not maybe culturally Western cultural perspective seen as being sort of as intimate as paper as print. And I think that acknowledging those feelings is actually an important part of striving towards becoming a sort of more mindful digital reader. Because I think that part of the reason we have this sort of binarized conversation, we tend to kind of flatten out what reading means, right? So for some people, their first association with reading is like crack it open a good novel at the beach or by the pool and getting some absorbed or lost a certain kind of experience. And feeling like digital experience might kind of ground them or read them too much in a world outside the book. And that's really unappealing for a lot of readers. But I think to become a more intentional reader, we have to think about really what are the affordances of digital reading? Where might it be appropriate? What might that do for us that's different even if it's not a feeling, right? We might be able to say, Yeah, I'll never be able to cozy up with my, you know, my tablet or my phone. And the way that I might cozy up with my book. Not really a problem if what you're trying to do is read something academically, is not really a problem. If what you're trying to read is a new article

from the New York Times. Is that an issue if you're trying to read technical documentation that will help you fix a chair. I'm just thinking of different examples here, huh? Kind of understanding that reading take lots of shapes and forms and not to your point of your review, Derek, something you noticed was that you couldn't do a lot of the affordances that you would think would make reading on the screen valuable and being able to take snippets and screenshots to share to entity at length about the boundaries of space, which is a real limitation. So reading imprint, you had specific purposes in mind that were being met by your material needs. So there was a little bit of a frustration there. I think the same thing happens in print, right? Where people, so as expected, e-reader to feel like their eyes can relax the same way as I can on paper. It just won't write, we just know it's not going to happen. So if we have clear expectations about where what we're doing, we can feel not only are people who are satisfied with what we're having, but we can make better choices about really what makes sense for us in different situations.

Derek [9:55] Yeah. Well, and I, I'm also drawn to some of your comments and your book about our students and sometimes their lack of choice. That, you know, they've got a phone and that's their, you know, while they're on the subway commuting, that's their time to do the reading for class. And so, you know, having a 12-pound textbook is not helpful at that point. It may be the kind of the only tool that they have. Could you say a little bit more about that? Because I think there's a there's a, there's kind of an equity argument for a more expansive approach to digital reading. **Jenae [10:28]** Absolutely. I'd love to stick to that. So, something that I bring up an inch or two. The book is the fact that recent anticodons data has shown that 99% of students own smartphones. That's a staggering number. And I think even in 2021 one is a recording this, there's some perception that smartphones are a luxury device. That it's a thing that an affluent student has that's kind of nifty and gadgetry. But to your point, that might be the only device student's own, and it makes sense for that to be the one choice they make, right? They can communicate on it. They can pay their bills on it, right? It just sort of make sense as an all in one. And especially for students who are working, right or commuting, they're not going to be lugging around 20 pounds of books and course readers with them. They're probably not even going to have a laptop with them. So, and it feels like in higher ed sometimes we're resistant to the idea of using technologies that we ourselves, the students didn't use. That it can be hard to imagine, right? Reading. I've heard a lot of disdainful comments like, I can't believe it, my students wrote a whole essay on their phones. I don't know how they could possibly do that. And while I think that's a well-intentioned kind of comment like I to I personally would struggle with reading a really long article on my

phone. I would struggle with writing an essay on my phone. It doesn't mean it's not possible. And in fact, for many students, it's all they've got. It's what they're going to have at their disposal when it's convenient for them. So if we really believe in practicing equitable educational practices, we have to think about it, not just in terms of things we do in the space, the classroom, but we have to think of it as ways that we set up and a responsive to the material circumstances and conditions of our students lives. And mobile really is the way our students are engaging and so much of their work, learning management systems have really good mobile apps these days. And so there's a lot of things instructors could do simple scaffolding, whether it's sort of an instruction and their learning management system that tells the students, Hey, download the reading on your phone from the Canvas or whatever elements are using mobile app. Download the Adobe Acrobat mobile app reader. There's a bunch of routers for PDFs, but your applications. And use these features with your finger. You can add these notes or do these things. Just simple instrumental steps might sound like it's just sort of like technical gadgetry. But really it's about helping students leverage their material affordances to engage in practices, engage an academic skill development. Then again, you might not think you might practice, but are there. And it is reaching students where they are and accepting that this is possible rather than just dismissing it as an impossibility. **Derek: [13:14]** Yeah. Well, and you've touched on another question I was going to ask you is, is, how can I go about teaching digital reading if I'm not very good at digital reading? And I say that just on my own behalf, right? I mean, there's things I do digitally that I think I'm, I am pretty good at in terms of reading and making sense of information. But I also know there's lots of stuff I'm not good at. And so, I can imagine a lot of instructors might find themselves in a situation where they're like, **Jenae: [13:41]** Yes! **Derek: [13:41]** I never use a PDF reader on my phone. I don't know how to teach students how to use that well. Do you have any advice for someone in that boat? **Jenae: [13:51]** Yeah. So, I guess my first question would be maybe for you specifically, we can kind of work through what you're thinking of and then we can now generalize. So, like, what do you struggle with specifically? Like what is hard for you about reading and digital spaces? **Derek: [14:04]** That's a good question. I don't do it much. My phone I do feel like the phone is such a tiny little real estate that it's hard for me to its good. Kind of locally. Like if i, for low comprehension tasks where I can kind of swipe through a book. Well, gosh now I'm just thinking about all the ways I do read on my phone actually all the time. I don't do things on my phone. I read short things on my phone constantly. It's going to be a little longer. I'm going to move either to my laptop or in the case of a book, I, I tend to prefer a paperback if I can get it. I don't know what diagnosis do you have for me?

Jenae: [14:46] Well, there's a couple things here which is that if you're making very intentional decisions based on length, and on genre. And so I think one thing you could do is if you're trying to sort of teach this and you're not doing it yourself. First of all, I would just be transparent about your narrative and your journey with your students, right? I think that a lot of students somehow think that their professors like just magically can do everything, through some like an innate special talent which is often not true, right? We learn these behaviors over time and we have certain patterns and ways of doing things. So first of all, I would tell your story. I would narrativize where you struggle, where you find solutions and what works for you all while acknowledging that they might not work for them. So, what I would say, the one thing you can do, especially with the phone, if that's not a place you're comfortable reading longer things. I honestly, I would do a little bit of research to just kind of find some solutions you've seen other people do, right? Kinda draw upon, think of it like a little research challenge, right? How do other people tackle? That's how did they solve it? And, you know, one thing is to think about exploring what are some of the apps out there that are free? That might give students some of these possibilities for engagement with it. And give students options, right? Can we don't want to ever push any one particular app or product. I named a couple apps or products. I'm talking about a workflow because they were the first that kind of came to mind to me. But there's a whole suite of things out there that we can kind of help students choose from and diagnosed based on their situation. If you are an iPhone user, think about this. If you're an Android user, think about that. You're hearing this and thinking, Gosh, I don't. Do you want your product research? I'd also connects with people on your campus who do this work, right? Every campus has a whole Katara of educational technologists. Your center for teaching and learning, of course probably has some folks who it's their job to also think about NCLEX, some of these things. So pooling resources with your colleagues, really working collaboratively with your educational technology or IT staff on what's available at your campus. There might even be things on your campus that you don't know about that could audience digital reading. For example, the, there's a product that I just learned about our campus through Microsoft called Immersive Reader, where students on mobile or on a phone can actually adjust the typeface and spacing of their text no matter what kind of file type it is in the learning management system. Like that's such a game changer, right? Just to turn on this one feature and able to instantly tune or kind of modify text in whatever way works for them or not, can make all the difference on a phone where we say the real estate's trainee. Or you can solve that by making the font bigger and scrolling. You might, that might make you feel like, I know some people don't like to enlarge their fonts for a variety of reasons. But some people might find that to

be totally right. **Derek: [17:31]** I think it's inevitable for me.

Jenae: [17:34] I think for all of us. **Derek: [17:36]** I'm at the age where I'm realizing that it is inevitable. **Jenae: [17:40] Y**eah, I mean, heck, I have to do that. I have really terrible eyesight actually. So, I'm often sort of adjusting and tuning and playing around with text, but I didn't know that inherently, I didn't sure. Sometimes I'll shoot things like PDF documents. People use PDFs because of the fixity of the property, right. Trying to sort of preserve a certain kind of appearance. But there are a lot of the benefit of things they digitize is that you can kind of break that fixity. I mean a print book. Obviously, you can't do anything to adjust the font size or shape or spacing, nothing. But that's really, again, a benefit we can point out. So even if you're someone who doesn't use as features, yeah, they're out there. So just kind of having a little bit of, I'd say mindfulness and awareness can really help. I guess the other note I would say too, if you're not really thinking from an app-based perspective or are really just thinking, okay, well, what's at the core of, of good reading, right? That can be a good starting point to, to think about, okay, even if I'm not really sure where I want students do my reading, what do I want them to do with the reading, right? What's even the goal of this reading in the first place? Or are because at are you wanted them to read instructions for the assignment? Are you wanting them to read an article or you wanting them to read fiction? Are you wanting them to read a lab report? Right? Needs are going to have different ways of reading to send it can also think about, okay, where, what are the options I can kind of recommend based on their genres I'm choosing not what you also can kind of get a little bit outside of your experience as well. Just think about, if I had to embody my student, what would I be thinking about? What would I be doing? **Derek: [19:14]** Yeah, Well, and I think I'm falling into this trap that you mentioned earlier that I'm flattening reading. I'm thinking of reading of just one thing. And that form of reading I may not like to do in my phone, or I may not be good at it on my phone, right? Whether I like it or not. But there's lots of different forms of reading. And as an instructor, there may be lots of kinds of reading I do pretty regularly on my phone. **Jenae: [19:37]** Yeah, you're mentioning like tweets and stuff that you read and write like that's what your students are doing too, and you might have bite-size things for your class that are kind of like, yeah. It's like one of my colleagues, Michael Greer, made the case to me that I just like haven't stopped thinking about, which is if you can design and instruction that fits in the space of your phone. You designed your online instructions really well because you basically done the space in between on your phone. And that means you've gotten down to the core points. You're thinking about kind of the user experience of navigating a digital space. And you're probably saving a lot of contexts that your students might not really need

to do what they need to do. It might not work for everything, but it was a piece of advice that has just kind of stuck with me to look at stoichiometry.

Derek: [20:23] Let's talk, speaking of practical things for, for, for teachers and instructors and educators. What tell us about your framework in your love for alliteration. What are the five Cs in your, in your digital reading framework? **Jenae: [20:35]** Oh, I'm so glad to acknowledge my love for alliteration. I work really hard to get all these parts, to be "C' words, right? So, at the core of the book, I have a digital reading framework that really draws upon five ways of reading or five ways of thinking about reading. I've kind of debated calling them habits of mind. I settled on strategies, five strategies. So, they're called curation, connection, creativity, contextualization and contemplation. And their order in that way because you could kind of take those strategies in a certain sort of step-by-step order. So, curation just to kind of give a thumbnail sketch, refers to a cluster of strategies that have to do with identifying what's most important than every reading process we have. Whether we're reading something, one thing and a lot of depth, or we're reading across a bunch of different articles or resources. We're inherently having to curate out. What's meaningful for us. And by us here, I mean the reader, the reader's going to have to always be thinking about what's, what's useful for them. What are they taking away from it? What are we doing with that information? And a criticism of a digital reading process is that it can be really tough to curate. It's hard to kind of pull out particular lines are sentences or ideas from a digital reading without just creating like a mess of a Word document with a bunch of copy and pasting quotes. Well, it's hard to find things again. Or whether she's tough to feel like, you know, where you are, like materially speaking to the text, it can be hard to kind of curate that way. So that's section of framework has a lot of strategies for doing that. Connection really refers as the second part of the framework. Connection refers to this idea that when we read, it's valuable to make connections either to prior authors or fingers, or to connect to prior ideas or knowledge to build upon what we know and learn new things. So, the strategies there are really ways to help instructors think about how they support their students and making those connections really explicit. A real benefit of digital reading. And that was actually very easy to like materially connect things, right? You've got links, real old school technology for making connections really transparent. Or you can create kind of bridges and maps and really exciting multimodal kinds of projects to show and illustrate connections. Any citation tool is a way of showing connections, right? When you see who has cited whom. **Derek: [22:59]** Sure. **Jenae: [23:00]** And in those maps, right? That's, uh, kind of connection building activity that can be really valuable for certain kinds of assignments or reading activities. **Derek: [23:07]** Well and I feel like it's also

something that students don't always know to do when they are reading, right?

Jenae: [23:15] Right? Absolutely. **Derek: [23:18]** I need to direct their attention that this is one of the things we do when we encounter text as we try to make sense of it in terms of other things we've read, other things we've encountered, or maybe connected to something we don't know. I loved your example of the kind of the, you know, just linking out. Here's a term, here's an idea, here's a quote, and here's a link out to something else that's connected. I have my students in my first-year writing seminar read a novel by Cory Doctorow. And he has a lot of surveillance technology ascribed in the novel. And I want my students to have a sense of what, which of that technology is actual and which of it is science fiction. And so I have a like a bookmarking assignment where I had students go and they have to find recent news stories about some of the technologies mentioned in the novel. And I think that's, I hadn't, I hadn't thought about that as a kind of digital reading strategy until I read that chapter in your book. But it is, it's, it's given them a tool for doing one part of the reading that I think it's actually pretty important. **Jenae: [24:16]** Oh yeah, I love that example because it really illustrates the need actually to go and make those connections to have a deeper understanding of the short story. I'm sure part of me probably wipe a moment is like the slippage between fiction and reality probably and those sorts of technologies. Because yeah, we kind of live in a surveillance dystopia as a different bone. **Derek: [24:40]** The novel feels hyperbolic in its treatment of the surveillance state. And so, it's actually pretty interesting when my students find out that certain elements of that state or are actually based entirely in reality? J**enae: [24:53]** Yeah. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Love that. Right. And it's simple. It's not that these charges have to be very high-tech, I think is something I'm kind of hearing. And your note about that as well and your activities. It's just it's just Googling, right? But it's very intentional Googling and it's not going to happen because to your ML, excuse me, I shouldn't say it's not going to happen. It's a lot less likely to happen unless you really designed intentionally an activity or an assignment that takes advantage of that space and that points them to it. Because I think so much of reading education has involved kind of this obsession with being focused, being attentive and paying attention, which sure, being attentive is, is valuable. But only when you're asking for certain kinds of things. You can be extremely attentive and focused when you're making those connections that requires a different kind of attention, even if it's not singular attention in one particular space. So, I think that's like something that doesn't get unpacked a whole lot around reading, we tend to kind of like jump to this conclusion that like focus reading is the only reading when. And that's why the title is called Skim, Dive, Surface because I think people focus on deep diving and you got to do a deep dive. Well now

sometimes actually skimming is exactly what you need to do. And sometimes surfacing out, taking stock of where you are in the water. To just take my metaphor a step further, is exactly what you can't just stay in the water the whole time you got to come up for air.

Derek: [26:19] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I love that. Well, and I think it's awesome things that perhaps those of us in academia who may or may not be comfortable with certain technologies are probably doing these moves in our reading with some way or another, right? Like it's quite natural for me to run across a term I don't know in a reading, and I go look it up to see what, what it means and where it came from and why would they use that term? And, and that maybe something I do pretty intuitively as a kind of expert reader in my field. But it's not necessarily something that would occur to our students to do. Especially if, if they've spent a lot of education being told not to do that, right, and to focus more. **Jenae: [26:59]** Exactly, exactly, exactly. And in the book, I mean, I do a little bit of a lit review of folks who have discussed kind of how the Common Core State Standards have impacted literacy work in K-12. So, Ellen Carrillo is a really great source on that. I cite her work. Mora Smalls, a librarian, who did a bunch of interviews I cite here I thought were really important for students. Basically, said you're on your own. If you have to talk about reading in college, I deeply related to that. You know, when I was a peach, got my PhD in English, I felt deeply embarrassed at a certain point. I was like, I don't know how to read. Like it kind of struck me in a certain place when I was like buried in reading hundreds of pages of texts each week, it was like it just dawned on me that I actually didn't know how to do it. And so, it just took years and years to kind of figure it out and internalize it and get advice and talk to other people. But I think we can avoid a lot of paint with our students if we just kind of make visible these behaviors. And to again locate them in particular material spaces. Because they can't take that materiality and how those impact our behaviors for granted, they deeply shaped the pathways that we pursue when we engage in these reading conversations? **Derek: [28:16]** Yeah. Okay. So we've had to cease? Yes. So, it was curation and connection, right? **Jenae: [28:25]** You got it. Okay. **Derek: [28:27]** So what are the other three? **Jenae: [28:29]** All right, So the other guys, creativity, which is really kind of a surface component of this framework and away or deep dive depending on actually what you do. But the idea of creativity is that with every reading, we're not just going to stay stuck in one person's perspective, right? We're going to do something with that reading. Either rid of build something new, we might. In a traditional literature perspective, maybe we're going to write a thesis statement about it. You might come up with an argument. But other contexts you might create a visualization of that reading or you might create an audio response to that reading. So, the whole creativity

section is really thinking of ways that people take other's ideas and transform them into their own. That's part of not just kind of understanding what you read, but applying it, making sense of it. So that's where your creativity might seem like this kind of artsy sort of component, but it doesn't, again, have to be particularly artistic or particularly grandiose. That could really be something as simple as have your students create a voice memo or have your students create a little data visualization. Something that taken away from that reading just to kind of put it in a new perspective to get it outside of the space of a, an article or book. Or it feels like a kind of belongs to someone else and make it their own. Contextualization is the fourth category. And that has to do with what a lot of people might refer to as information literacy. It's sort of this moment where we can invite students to think about not just the text kind of floats isolated in space, but that it came from a human who has a certain history and has certain politics and who has a certain orientation. And so really, again, a benefit of being online as you have an ease of accessing the whole historical, political, social framework for where and how this reading exists. And that can be as simple as going into Wikipedia and looking at a series of Wikis, right? About things associated with this reading or using things like a citation tools kind of cited by feature to see here the web of things that really it's a connection to, connection and contextualization have a lot of overlaps with sort of the difference being that contextualization might really invite you to say, not just who's in a scholarly conversation say, but why, who are these people? Where do they come from? What were they responding to a writing for writing about? And this is great, even if you're reading fiction, right, to understand the historical context. You know my favorite examples: Why are Dickens novel so long? Well, he got paid by the word dozen Victorian publishing, not just how authors made their money. And that's important to understand if you're reading any Victorian literature is to know about the economic and material conditions that impacted that book. Or if you're reading anything published online, right? This is a great example you might want to contextualize, which tweets that off of firestorm of blog posts, right? They might be reading as an assignment, write all these things kind of matter when you contextualize. And then the final element is contemplation, which really is about inviting students to practice awareness of what they're feeling as they're reading that we want to ask students are taking on reading assignments. So, take stock of what's confusing them, what's exciting them. And to also pay attention to how their material constraints might be impacting what they're reading or experiencing too, right? So, I have activities and they're things like creating a reading log or reading journal. Where sometimes can be perceived by students is as busy work. But if we frame these logs in terms of, hey, you're building a research log for a paper. And as part of your research log, you kind of have to be noting and paying attention

to things. So, you're not scrambling at the last minute to come up with your ideas. And that means noting and taking, tracking down where you found things, how you found them, how you were feeling when you found them. Because that can help you remember and keep better track of the whole experience of information trying to find. So that's kind of the overview of what's in there. **Derek: [32:39]** Yeah, yeah. **Jenae: [32:40]** I've got an example from the book tail to help write.

Derek: [32:45] A good chunk of that middle section of your book is, is very practical. How, here's an activity and here's how you would set it up and here's how you'd have your students do and, and maybe some categories of tools that would be helpful for students in you. Yeah. So let me ask. I'm curious to get your thoughts on something that I think a lot of our faculty at Vanderbilt have discovered this year, which is a social reading tool of social annotation tool of some sort. We've been using Perusall but Hypothesis is a good one. There are some others out there. And this is something that I think does strike me as kind of different in the digital space, in the analog space, right? If you and I are going to collaboratively annotate a book in the, in the analog space. I would have to write in the margins and then mail you the book. And then I might write in the margins to. But it's so much easier in the digital space for multiple people to annotate a book together. And I'm curious kind of what like where might that tool land in your framework? What are, what are some ways you might use that tool in your framework? J**enae: [33:54]** Yes, social annotation tools are super powerful. I think it fits in a few different places. It could fit into curation. In so far as you can see in social annotation tools, what are the things that lots of people find important, right? That's a kind of curation activity that as an instructor and I say "Hey, wow, I noticed lots of people were all really drawn to the segment, or there's a lot of controversy about this one moment. Let's, this can be a way to focus discussion or kind of create a launch pad for say, a group projects formation or collaborative work thereafter." But you could also think of social annotation is a connection activity, right? Especially if you want students to kind of be finding links, right? Think of the, the key with a social annotation activity is to give some good prompts, right? Because then you don't want to reproduce the discussion board problem of like, this is interesting. I agree with Derek. Derek, so great. It's easy to do. So, having some prompted, hey, when you read this moment in the text, what did this remind you of? And then one-on-one student sees what funding reminds them. Oh, it might trigger something else for her, for another student. And can kind of create this cascaded connection that can actually be meaningful other than like, yes, good job. I think what you said is perfect for which is not really annotations so much as it is just kind of like mutual padding on the

back. I mean, that's a good thing too, but might not get us quite as far from a learning perspective. Sure. So, I'd say it's probably fits into both of those categories. The best. **Derek: [35:30]** Yeah. Yeah. Well, enough. And this is the other thing that I think is important is that you can have one digital tool that you're using for different purposes, right? **Jenae: [35:40]** Yes. **Derek: [35:41]** It's the same tool, but in this case it's a connection tool. And in this in this little assignment, it's a curation tool.

Jenae: [35:49] Yes, exactly. And that's sort of why I am, not sort of it is why I made a framework with terms that could be that have a little bit of slippage. Because I'm the goal. One goal of this book is to really try and help instructors clarify why they're having students read when they read. I think that a challenge a lot of instructors have sometimes is getting away from wanting just to dump tons of content in their classes. Because as researchers write me sort of hoard lots and lots and lots and lots of contents. I did that too. I always joke, I'm a digital Packer at like I just have so much reading that I just bookmark forever. But a syllabus is not a reading list. Your syllabus has to be a really intentional construction of things. And so, when we're picking things that were being really deliberate about what goes in that syllabus, we want to think about why am I having students read this? What are they going to do with it? What are they going to get out of it? And so, the framework is not only meant to give people ways to see what you can do really well in digital spaces. That is with cure, curation, connection, creativity, contextualization in contemplation. There are lots of tools and things you can use online that makes it really easy to engage in as habits of mind and those strategies. And when we can name what those strategies are, we can much more powerfully link modality and activity together to make the experience a lot more meaningful, not just a reading list for the sake of reading long store content for the sake of content, right? **Derek: [37:18]** Right. Or just, here's the reading, go forth. Students make sense of it, right? **Jenae: [37:24]** Yeah, right, exactly. That's, I mean, that's kind of those are all my reading experiences in college. Grad school was hard. I mean, I struggled with it and I loved reading. Both my undergraduate and my graduate degrees are in English for goodness' sake. Like I shouldn't be the person who doesn't find reading challenging. And of course, even that sentence right there. No one has ever inherently good at any of these things we need to scaffold and be mindful and specific about what we're trying to do to learn. **Derek: [37:57]** Now, let me ask a little bit more about the modality because another of the kind of angles you take on this subject in your book is through the lens of neuroscience, cognitive science, learning science. And I am curious what are from those perspectives, how is reading or how can reading on a screen be different than reading on a page? **Jenae: [38:18]** Right? So the third chapter, the

book really dives into lava lit review and I'll say full disclosure about I'm not a neuroscientist. So, I was really reading a lot.

Derek: [32:28] I think you said you were an English major. **Jenae: [38:11]** Yeah. So, I will say that full disclosure, not my background, but I was I wanted to include that work because I think it's important to acknowledge that reading is a profit that exists in our brains and that might wire off different neural pathways. And one of the critiques, a digital reading is that it changes our neural pathways in ways that some people find troubling. I remember reading a lot of popular science or people kind of clean like, oh, reading on screen has broken my brain and now I can't concentrate. So, I was really specifically trying to respond to that experience that some readers have. So, though the literature from neuroscience and cognitive psychology really seems to show that when readers are on a screen, they are going to change their behaviors depending on the genre. And this is true in print by the way. But there was a big Meta study done in 2018 that kind of compare it to other studies that basically showed that regardless of age, regardless of kind of educational level, most readers struggled war with basic comprehension on screen than on paper. That generally speaking, the ability to remember pieces of information and the ability to retain that information was diminished. And there were some differences with genre. And like I mentioned, so people tended to retain the facts of narratives better than informational pieces of information. Between the two genres for narrative, there's actually was not much of a noticeable difference, which I found to be an interesting finding. So I think there, there is some truth to the fact that people do struggle with reading on screen because they might not have the material markers of progress. For example, they might not have the strategies for the screen that they would have footprint in terms of dog hearing a page or making a written annotation, or even having what theories consider who's first, who's like texts sudden it's like just an awareness and like, Oh, I remember that this was on the top part of the page and that will activate this moment for me better soon as I kind of like embodied cognitive component of this work as well, that can kind of get lost even though being online is a deeply embodied activity. Our bodies are always part of what we do, right? The tactility. That is something that is, It's just different. The text is not connected to the knowledge where the text is itself. So, I think that to me the conclusion from that us, as instructors, we can be mindful that an offer, again, intentional strategies that are sort of really cognizant of those limitations. Cognitively speaking, where we know that we struggle, which really isn't the kind of memory components of recalling information.

Derek: [41:20] So perhaps if we know our students are going to struggle in those areas a bit more on the digital readers. We provide workarounds, strategies, ways to kind of compensate for that. Because my guess is that there are other things that, as you said, like the affordances of the digital technologies do allow us to do other things easier. **Jenae: [41:41]** Yes. Yes, exactly. It's and it's worth knowing a lot of these studies I was, maybe I shouldn't have been surprised to see this, but I wasn't a surprise that a lot of them are just testing kind of basic knowledge. Recall. Okay. Read a paragraph or takeaway the paragraph from you. What do you remember about it? That's kind of how most of the sides are comparing, modality. And reading. Or sometimes they would do by speed, right? How quickly can you read something on? How quickly can read on paper, which is still important to measure. But higher education, I think most of the time we're not as concerned with reading speaks. It's not necessarily an indicator of content knowledge or learning. It's an indicator more of kind of literacy acquisition, which again important. But literacy also, I think it's kind of a big tent term. So, I can capture a lot more than just kind of knowledge content in uptake or language uptake. Yeah. But, you know, if our goal is to have our students make connections between what they're reading and other things they've read or encountered. Well, that's not just can you remember this paragraph ten minutes later? Right. That's a whole different skill set for them to use. And so. That for that objective, there may be some other tools that digital environment offers to make that easier or more meaningful. **Jenae: [42:56]** Exactly. I think that's, that's exactly it. Just, just I think finding being open to making those options available is a really compelling reason to understand what you get from a digital environment. And there may be cases whereas an instructor or even your students might just say "You know what? I do want to stick with paper." And that's great too. I might make sense in certain contexts to do that, but just, I think avoiding kind of sweeping generalizations. **Derek: [43:25]** Sure. **Jenae: [43:26]** That's sort of, I think veer on neuro myths about paper being necessarily better because it's paper actually like a deeply sort of historical kind of perspective. I mean, we've only had paper-based technologies for, or books since the late 1800s, mass printing, kind of around the turn of the century. And so, there is a chapter, but that actually, if you want to get into the history of it, I do a little bit of a historical overview to on like how we've always kind of felt a little suspicious when technology was on us. And we can see the same debates over and over and over about media changes impacts to memory, to our ability to discern reliable pieces of information like we're not in a new moment here. There might be some new affordances to think about, but right here is, are not new. **Derek: [44:14]** This may be a terrible segway, but I do feel like we, we've just finished some kind of historical moment, having seen almost all of higher education moved to online instruction for the past year, as

we record this in May of 2021. And so, did you write your book before the pandemic? **Jenae: [44:32]** Yes. **Derek: [44:33]** Okay. I wrote my last book before the pandemic, and it was a book about teaching with technology. So, it made for a very interesting year. And I'm curious if there's, you know, were there things from your book that seem particularly salient this past year or vice versa, where they're things that you might want to go back and add your book now that now that higher education has lived through a year of remote instruction?

Jenae: [44:56] Yes. Oh my gosh. I feel like I spent the whole last or being like, oh, I wish my wish I'd written this book one year earlier because I can sort of circulate and be out there and I want if I was doing copy edits around in 2020, you so there are a couple notes in the book that refers to the pandemic, kind of what I added in later. After I'd gotten purity right around the time the pandemic broke out. Your peer reviewers are basically like publish a balanced the pandemic. A little thing that might impact how people read those. So, to address your question more directly. I think the things that are probably most salient to think about are just honestly some of the creative strategies around doing this work. I feel like I heard a lot of how to say complaints in the pandemic around how limiting it was to just be teaching over Zoom how limited Canvas was. And I kind of was a little disappointed in some ways at some lack of imagination for pursuing some solutions or ways to teach online that weren't just about what you could keep in your Zoom window. But there's the whole internet, this whole thing. It's a big library at our disposal to do this work. What's more amazing than that, if we can leverage it appropriately in, and I get it. I'm so sympathetic to the fact that a lot of people had to move online very quickly who hadn't been engaging or thinking about these things ever. So there was a lot to learn the cognitive load with super-duper high. So I'm sympathetic to that. So at the same time, I think that now that were emerging from the major emergency pandemic, I'm hoping people can kind of take a step back and think, okay, there were some things I really liked about being online. What worked well? What were some things that really enhance student learning or that gave students more options? I know, but they see this book and think, okay, here are more options for continuing to bridge students online and maybe in-person experiences of folks are repopulating the campuses. Here are things we can do to make sure that we don't lose that flexibility, that we don't lose some of the benefits of the modifications, the socialist social components of working together online that can be really meaningful and that again, can reach students where they are. Especially if we have students resuming, commutes again or trying to sort of do working in off hours or even for students who really kinda benefit from the system having really structured asynchronous work time. One thing I think I kind of wish I had addressed more of this book were some of the digital

literacies. I think gaps that still sort of exist, both for instructors and students alike shine a very early version of this book. I did have a whole chapter committed to digital literacy, but it was already too long and I had to kind of occur. So amazingly, you're seeing like a slimmed down version with us today. That just means there's another victory at some point, but I think that the digital literacy gaps are huge. And I addressed in this book the fact that we can't call students digital natives. A, it's a term that's sort of laden with bad colonial metaphor, but like B. Also, it's just, we can't sort of assume that just because someone's at a certain age, they're going to have a certain facility. I think. **Derek: [48:17]** I did appreciate your note that millennials are now assistant professors. Like millennials are not the kids anymore. They're your junior colleagues. **Jenae: [48:26]** Exactly. Exactly. I mean, all of this and I'll just be I'm a millennial myself, right? So, it's like I'm not teaching students my age.

Derek: [48:33] Right? **Jenae: [48:35]** So, it's just, but it's amazing how I'm going to kind of became a term for those young whippersnappers. But any kind of generational blanket, even assuming that older faculty will have less facility with technology, didn't necessarily pan out either in the pandemic. So, I think I wish I had maybe little bit of time. I kind of maybe even a little more on the nose and just addressing that for students and faculty alike. There are some things we have to understand about digital environments to do this work successfully. Even simple things like the difference between using an offline desktop application versus an online software application or, you know, downloading your text to your hard drive as opposed to accessing on the web like these might. These are not actually, well, they are basic concepts. They're foundational concepts, but they're not sure. They're not intuitive, right? And we have to address them if we're going to also close certain kinds of equity gaps around storage space on devices. For example, which if a student using a Chromebook which has a very short time, I'm able to store anything locally, right? So, we also have to kind of unpack assumptions around downloading PDFs or downloading Word documents as digital reading spaces. Yeah, if we're trying to really think diagnostically about what students are using. Sorry, Yeah, sorry. That was like four different answers. One question but has clearly been on our minds, so yeah, but I might of course. **Derek: [49:55]** And I think we've seen this in a lot of aspects of teaching is that we're just kind of technology use in general. So many people in higher education, like, like I feel like the floor was raised in terms of technology use. Like so many people have learned so many of those fundamentals that now the floor is at a different level. And so, I think we're going to see kind of different creative uses by faculty and other instructors. Going forward, I want to finish with one more question. Having read your acknowledgement section. What is it with you and writing and coffee shops because I also

think to a coffee shop in the acknowledgment section of my book. So, what is it about coffee shops that help us read and write? **Jenae: [50:41]** I want to say about the small, keep it brief because I know we're wrapping up one little material constraint. I wrote this book when I was living in Palo Alto. It might come as a surprise palette has a very expensive place to live. It's a little notorious for that. And when I was living there, I was living a very small space. I didn't have a desk at home. And I have, I'm not a traditional academic work and what I'd like to call academic adjacent kinds of roles, staff roles. And so, I was working nine to five. And so often I was writing this book on the weekends or odd hours. And so, to go work, to have a desk, I would go to a coffee shop. So that was one thing is I just there was more comfortable than working at my apartment. But the other piece of it is I think coffee shops have the thrill storied legacy there to historical legacy and being gathering places for mines. That being places where people share information, where there's something about the kind of like white noise, chatter and sounds of the steamer is a very sensory experience, multi-sensory experience of working in a coffee shop, a very stimulating. And so, I think I'm just, there's a certain cultural sensation with like being in that space and smelling the smell of coffee grounds and hearing the steamer and people chattering away. That just felt very productive for me. Yeah. So, I mean, I camped out those places for hours that they didn't tell. I sort of felt like, hey, know, I bought like 1, $2 coffee and stayed for like four hours, like probably the baristas are super annoyed that I did that, but. **Derek: [52:19]** Well, it's one of the things I'm looking forward to as life at least in certain parts of the US and starting to reopen, is that potential to be in those spaces again, right? Or do I will say there's a website called Coffitivity, coffee, e-tivity. It's like coffee and activity merged together. I can't pronounce it for hard portmanteau. Yeah, it is. But you can just go there and hit Play and it will sound like a coffee shop in your, on your laptop as long as you want it. It does it smell like a coffee shop, but it does sound like a coffee shop. And I found that very helpful.

Jenae: [52:52] That's one good piece. Yeah. I'm looking forward to the day where I sit and have a table, one of those places again and have the whole full embodied experience. That sounds like a good Coffitivity. In solution and intra. **Derek: [53:08]** Yes. Yes. Well, and it goes back to your point that we have these, you know, these physical spaces and these material limitations. And I think my approach is usually I'd like to have more tools in my toolbox because that just gives me more options, right? And so, I need to do this if I have a coffee shop, that's great, right? If I need to do this other thing and it's a social annotation tool then I'm glad I have both of those things in my in my toolbox. **Jenae: [53:35]** Yes. Exactly. And that's really the core message, I think in this book, which is that the more options, the better.

Why close things down based on our own assumptions about what we think is good or bad or deeper, superficial. Why not open it all up and make all those options transparent? **Derek: [53:54]** Well, thank you. Thank you for taking this time today. This has been a lovely conversation where our listeners will enjoy this and hopefully read your book too. **Jenae: [54:02]** I hope so. Thanks Derek for inviting me. This was really fun.

Derek: [54:12] That was today current Director of Academic Technology at California State University at Sacramento. And the author of skim Dive surface, teaching digital reading, a 2021 release from West Virginia University Press in their teaching and learning in higher education series, full disclosure. I too am an author and that series, frankly, it's a pretty great group to belong to. The series is edited by James-Lange, who we talked to back in episode 84. And he has a knack of finding authors who combine the scholarship and the practice of teaching and very accessible ways. And also me. Thanks to Janae for talking with me for the podcast and sharing some insights from her new book. If you'd like to learn more about today and her work, you can find her at Janae cone.net or follow her on Twitter at Janae underscore cone. I'm very glad I followed her on Twitter several years ago and that I randomly sat next to her at that conference. I've learned a lot from her and I know our listeners will to see the show notes for some links. Leading lines is produced by the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and the gene and Alexander heard libraries. You can find us on Twitter at leading lines pod and on the web at leading lines Pod.com. This episode was edited by McDaniel. Look for new episodes the first, third Monday of each month, and sometimes you will find them. I'm your host, Derek Prof, Thanks for listening.