Transcript

[00:00] [background music]

Derek Bruff: [00:05] Welcome to "Leading Lines," a podcast from Vanderbilt University. I'm your host, Derek Bruff, Director of the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching. In this podcast we explore creative, intentional and effective uses of technology to enhance student learning, uses that point the way to the future of educational technology in college and university settings.

[00:22] In this episode I'm very happy to share an interview with Zoe LeBlanc, a sixth-year doctoral student in history here at Vanderbilt University. Zoe studies networks, ideas and spaces in modern history, and her dissertation examines the role of Cairo as a hub for anticolonial activism in Africa during the Cold War.

[00:40] I met Zoe back in 2011 or 2012 when she became the Center for Teaching's first HASTAC Scholar. HASTAC is a network of academics exploring the intersection of teaching, scholarship and technology. I remember having a series of really fascinating conversations with Zoe that year as we explored together ways to bring the digital into our teaching.

[00:58] The following year, Zoe was a fellow at the Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning, where she continued her explorations of educational technology and helped launch a "Conversations on Digital Pedagogy" series that's still going strong. This year, Zoe is a fellow at Vanderbilt's new Center for Digital Humanities and she continues to build and enrich the digital humanities community at Vanderbilt.

[01:18] I spoke with Zoe this summer, shortly after she arrived back on campus from one of her mini-trips to overseas archives. We talked about her experiments in digital pedagogy, her approach to using educational technology and her career path as an aspiring digital historian.

[01:32] [background music]

Derek: [01:35] Zoe, thanks for talking with me today. Can we start by having you introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your doctoral research?

Zoe LeBlanc: [01:43] Sure, thank you for having me, Derek. As you know, I've always been a big fan of your work and the CFT's. It was pretty instrumental the time I joined you guys in 2012 as a HASTAC Scholar. Since many moons ago, I've been working on my dissertation, but also taking the stuff I've learned from the CFT.

[02:04] I'm a doctoral student in the history department and I'm going into my sixth year in the fall. I look at international anticolonial movements, but through the lens of Cairo in the '50s and '60s and try to map both the discourses, but also networks that underlie this really brief moment of anticolonial idealism that shaped the immediate decolonization moment.

[02:30] That's what I spend a lot of my research time doing. Yeah, I have spent the last few years going to archives and just taking thousands and thousands of images...

[02:43] [laughter]

Zoe: [02:44] that now sit on my hard drive, that I'm now currently going through. That's where I'm at, at the moment.

Derek: [02:51] You mentioned going to archives. I'm grateful that we have a chance to talk because often when I ask to meet with you, you are in some other far part of the world.

Zoe: [02:59] Yeah, this is the first time — I was telling you — the first time I've been in Nashville in the summer. Kind of mixed feelings. I was really excited about it and then the weather happened.

[03:07] [laughter]

Zoe: [03:08] Now, I'm like, "Oh, maybe it was nice traveling." [laughs]

Derek: [03:13] Tell us, also, a little bit about your teaching experience here at Vanderbilt.

Zoe: [03:18] I've taught now four semesters in the history department. We're TAs there, but we also get to lead discussion sections. I've taught a whole slew of courses, mostly focused on modern historical topics. Cold War history. I did do a class on the Arab Spring, which was a lot of fun, and then I did a bit of an outlier class with the chancellor, actually.

[03:43] We taught the Federalist papers together, which was a really fun, almost introduction to constitutional law course. Of course, at the time I was teaching it, Hamilton, the musical, came out, which was super exciting. I'm kicking myself that we didn't go on a class field trip to New York.

[04:01] I've mostly been leading discussion sections and trying to work with students to help them understand complex historical topics and learn what thinking historically is, how to do research, how to write, those kind of things.

Derek: [04:19] Mostly undergraduates?

Zoe: [04:20] Yes, all undergraduates.

Derek: [04:22] All undergraduates.

Zoe: [04:23] Although I've been surprised at Vanderbilt, a lot of my students are from the sciences or med streams. A lot of medicine, health and society, econ and politics, really across the board, which is really cool.

Derek: [04:39] I've always thought it was pretty neat that our chancellor teaches regularly. Teaches undergraduates.

Zoe: [04:44] I definitely learned a lot from him. That course was just…it's a very intense…it's a three-hour seminar where we read about 10 pages of the Federalist papers, the close, close reading model. The students really loved it, so it was awesome.

Derek: [05:02] I want to talk more about your teaching, but first I want to step back just a little bit. You've been very active in the digital humanities community here at Vanderbilt. You mentioned your experience as a HASTAC Scholar a few years ago, but I know you've been involved in lots of other ways here at Vanderbilt and really beyond.

[05:21] How would you define that term, digital humanities, for someone who's not familiar with it?

Zoe: [05:27] [laughs] This is such a great question. I always joke with people outside of academia that when I say I do "digital humanities," it's like humanities professors discovered computers and was like, "This might be something!"

[05:41] I do actually think it's a lot more than that. It really can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different peoples. To me it really means meaningfully integrating digital tools, digital infrastructure into our research and teaching, but then also looking back at those things critically and applying the same type of scholarly analysis that we do to all other spheres of our lives.

[06:08] For some people, that means really going heavy on the digital pedagogy, which I see as the, I don't know, the gateway drug into digital humanities. I feel like everybody starts off with their teaching. At least for me, being the HASTAC Scholar, it made a lot of sense.

[06:24] As you go further you're like, "Maybe this might help for my research as well." Then you start thinking about, "Well, who's making these tools?" Or like, "Where are they coming from?" Then, "What is this infrastructure that I'm even using?" Those questions.

[06:38] That for me is how I've both experienced, but also define digital humanities. Just taking what we see as a critical analysis of humanities and trying to both integrate digital into that, but also use that as a lens to critique these structures and think about them thoughtfully.

Derek: [07:02] We mentioned HASTAC a couple of times, but I don't think we've said what that is. Can you say a little bit about...I don't know what the acronym...Can you help me remember that?

Zoe: [07:10] Yeah, I know it is. [laughs] . It's really the worst. It's a great short term. I think it's Humanities, Arts, Science, Technology Advanced Collaboratory. It ends on Collaboratory, which it is a weird word to end on. [chuckles] That's a program that I think you guys started in 2011 here at Vanderbilt with Cory.

Derek: [07:30] That's when we joined the national program, yeah.

Zoe: [07:32] Right, yeah, but it's this huge international program now that links digital humanities…a very broad sense of digital humanities. You have people coming from media studies, you even have some computer science people, I think.

[07:46] Just to bring them together in this virtual space to blog and share ideas and have a critical forum. Then they do this great conference every year that Vanderbilt's now sending two panels to a year. We got…

[08:00] [crosstalk]

Zoe: [08:00] Yeah, a whole little entourage but it's a really great conference to go to. It was actually the first conference I went to, it was in Toronto. It is so different than the normal conferences. It's so much more laid back, but also people really engage in it.

[08:16] Not to dismiss other conferences, but there's a tendency in I think a lot of academic conferences that people skip the panels or things like this. At HASTAC, I feel that people really went to go engage and then you have the Twitter backchannel, which is awesome. That was a great experience for me and now it's turned into this whole network on campus, which is awesome.

Derek: [08:39] Yeah. I think we had maybe 10 HASTAC Scholars this past year, sponsored by different centers around campus. It's a pretty cool…I thought it was a nice way to jumpstart our digital humanities community here, and to have people from around campus and different departments and different centers meet each other and interact and find common interests.

Zoe: [09:00] I'm actually going to be one of the digital humanities grad fellows next year at the new digital humanities center that's opening…

Derek: [09:07] I hadn't heard that. Congratulations.

Zoe: [09:09] Yeah, thank you. I'm super excited. When I saw that I was like, "I need this." I'm getting close to ending. It's silly to do this at this time, but I was, like you said before, I've spent a lot of time on this. I've gone to a lot of other places to learn about this. I've tried to build the network that I can to talk to people in this. It's very exciting to have finally a home for all of this to live.

[09:32] Vanderbilt's really grown in the last few years in terms of people interested, but I think we've just been missing some of the infrastructure to help people take it to the next level, especially going to conferences and stuff like that.

[09:43] It's hard to get funding for these things or buying a new computer, these things where I've had to invest in that on my own, so I'm very excited to see what this new center is and hopefully, yeah, becomes another hub in the network, another node.

Derek: [10:03] Let's talk a little bit about teaching. I've got more questions about your own professional development and your career and all that, but...

Zoe: [10:10] So do I.

[10:14] [laughter]

Derek: [10:14] Looking back on some of your teaching experiences, what are some ways that you've used technology to enhance the learning experience of your students?

Zoe: [10:22] The way I got into it was both HASTAC, but then also just being very frightened by Blackboard. [laughs] You're changing, but in the past, it was such a horrible tool. For me, the immediate thing became, "OK, I don't want to use this virtual space. I don't feel like this a great way for my students to understand the course and to share materials."

[10:46] The first thing I did was build the course website and that was for...Gosh, what was it? It was for my history of modern Middle East-US relations. From there, I started thinking about, "OK, how can we collect materials. How can we share them and expand the classroom outside of the walls? Continue the conversation?"

[11:13] In some ways you're just always struggling in class. How much content can you go over? Where it really came together was the course I taught on the Arab Spring. That was a really exciting one because, obviously, the Arab Spring itself was almost a digitally-born event.

[11:28] You can't really understand it without using digital tools. For that course, I took a lot of what I had learned in the previous courses and tried to integrate digital from the get-go. A lot of people see edtech or digital tools or digital learning as a one week in the course, like

the way you send your students to the library for one of the course meetings to learn what research is.

[11:53] We all know that that's really...it's a nice gesture, but it doesn't integrate it enough. What I did was I had this pretty robust WordPress site, but then I also had the students on Twitter and we had a whole back channel around the classroom hashtag. I also had Pinterest boards going and tried to really get them to start finding materials from elsewhere and sharing it and having a discussion.

[12:19] Twitter was also great because I got them to do their reading responses there, which was helpful, A, to make sure they did the readings, but also helpful to just see what readings were working and which ones weren't. It's always that awkward moment in a discussion section when you can tell nobody's done that particular reading.

[12:37] You want to sit through the silence, but it's also like we've have an hour. Do I want to fight you on this or not? Especially the Arab Spring, we were going through country after country and most of these students, this was their only course in history, let alone Middle Eastern or North African histories.

[12:54] It was really about trying to get them to start doing their own research and start seeing how these digital spaces could be both research sources like primary sources, but then also things that are ongoing. One of the great things, I've told you this story before...The students were using hashtags and this one student...we were doing a week on Saudi Arabia and Islam.

[13:21] He tweeted about the Prophet but hashtagged his name and that tweet went viral around Islamist circles in Saudi Arabia, which was a really exciting experience. It was a great teaching moment because it was like, "Look, these are really communities out there. This is not some cloistered discussion we're having in the classroom." It also brought up a lot of privacy questions though that I hadn't thought...

Derek: [13:45] Do you remember how many retweets it got? Was it...

Zoe: [13:47] I could pull it up.

Derek: [13:48] dozens or hundreds?

Zoe: [13:49] At the time, the class was so insular. It felt like it was thousands but it was probably maybe 50 or something. It was a lot more than anything else from the class got though.

Derek: [14:02] Sure, that's still a lot of actual eyeballs on that tweet.

Zoe: [14:05] Right. A very particular community, when every Twitter profile is a sheikh with a beard, it's very noticeable about who is looking in. I thought that was really great, but at the same time, brought up these questions for me about, "OK, what is the line between public and private?"

[14:28] I fall to the side of I really want students to produce publicly because as much as it's important to have space to share ideas and work through them, it's also important to be accountable. I also want to leave them space to maybe not share as much. For example, they could make a Twitter account with not their public name. That's what a lot of people have come to.

[14:54] Vivian's work on Twitter and the German experiments she did in her class with collaborative fiction writing, there's…

Derek: [15:01] This is Vivian Finch who's now an assistant director here at the Center for Teaching.

Zoe: [15:05] Yeah, it's such a fantastic…I would love to push Twitter further that way. The one week that I did let it go a bit broke was when I told them they had to retweet and reply to each other at least four times. I could barely keep up with the stream.

[15:21] It just went out of control, but then it was like, "Is this what I want or not? It's great they're having these discussions, but at the same time, how much control do you give up? I really like these moments because it really makes you think consciously about how you're teaching and the kind of choices you're making and makes them much more transparent than normally happens.

Derek: [15:47] I have several follow up questions.

Zoe: [15:48] Yeah. Sorry, that was a bit long.

Derek: [15:49] Let me unwind this a little bit. You said you had one week where you asked them to retweet and reply to each other. Prior to that, had they largely been tweeting out but not talking to each other?

Zoe: [16:02] Yeah, there was a few that clearly...there was a lot of pushback to using Twitter, which was surprising to me. There's a lot of people that were new to it, didn't really understand how it worked. I would definitely, in hindsight, do an early, "This is how Twitter works."

[16:19] I definitely assumed too much knowledge, you know, this whole myth of digital natives, and so...

Derek: [16:25] [laughs] Following Conan O'Brien on Twitter is not the same as engaging in academic conversations on Twitter.

Zoe: [16:30] Exactly. Right. Making them rethink this as a tool that you can use for scholarly discussions. A few of them would tweet out articles beforehand or like each other's or sometimes reply, but it wasn't a very robust discussion. Then that week, where I did tell them to engage with each other, then it just took off.

[16:52] It was really cool, but it was...it's so hard because especially, sometimes, on topics like this, people can have opinions that are not necessarily based on scholarly material. This is current politics, essentially. It's tough to want to allow them to express themselves, but then also want them to be more thoughtful and nuanced.

[17:14] That's where...everybody's had that moment in discussion section where it's like, "Do I let them keep talking or do I step in?" On Twitter, it got an exponential version of that because how do you even step in? You can't be like, "Stop." [laughs] "Pause button." [laughs] "That's enough."

Derek: [17:34] Did you start to intervene or did you tend to hold back and let them run the conversation?

Zoe: [17:40] I really wanted them to run the conversation. On something like this, they tended to look at me as such an expert that it, sometimes, would shut down conversations or they were looking for recognition on Twitter like, "Oh, she liked mine," That means it's a point

or something? I don't know.

[17:58] They interpret this in interesting ways. I really wanted it to be more of an organic discussion. This also happened, though, towards the end of the semester. After that, we had papers. It was an experiment left unfinished essentially, but it was interesting.

Derek: [18:16] The student whose tweet went viral, after that happened, what did you do either outside of class or during class to help process that with your students?

Zoe: [18:28] [laughs] Probably not as much as I should have at the time. I made a grimace when I noticed like, "I should have thought this more thoughtfully." I definitely started looking more at what people were doing with Twitter.

[18:42] I looked at previous stuff through HASTAC, but around that time, people were starting to nuance much more their approach to Twitter as a tool in the classroom and as a space for the classroom. For that student in particular, it was more of just a cool thing.

[19:00] I tried to get them to think about, "OK, this is an actual community." A lot of this course was just getting them to realize that there was real people in this part of the world, and a lot of them the same age as them and going through very different life experiences. Trying to get them to empathize. It was more a good teaching moment for making that connection.

[19:21] In hindsight, I would definitely try and think through more about getting them to understand what a hashtag does and what type of communities that links you into and thinking more thoughtfully about, in advance of the course, which hashtags should I tell them might...because it would be fun for them to experiment even, but I want it to be an intentional choice. I don't want it to be happenstance or haphazard.

[19:46] And then about the privacy stuff, a lot of this stuff is developing as we go forth. The university in terms of their policies on privacy, like, "Who owns this data?" Also, students realizing, "Is this my professional identity online?"

[20:00] This is something even I struggle with. What do you post online? Do you have a different Twitter account? Because in some ways, the nice thing about this is you can show that I was actually engaged in this later down the road potentially, but that's also having the

foresight to know where you might be down the road.

Derek: [20:19] Those are tough calls. Honestly, I'm still working through in many ways. I have a professional Twitter account and then I have a personal Twitter account. If I want to tweet about my kids or about whatever TV show I'm watching, I do that on my personal Twitter account. No one really cares, but it's fun and I know a few people there and that's fine.

[20:37] I try to keep that separately, but sometimes I wonder, am I being a little too artificial? These aren't real walls in my life. It's an ongoing debate in my head as to how to talk about some things and where to talk about things.

Zoe: [20:56] Exactly, especially college-age students. They're living these things so much and it's such a social space for them. For them to understand that these can also be professional scholarly spaces is incredibly important because down the road, it might hurt them if they've not thought about this, but then at the same time, you don't want them to…I don't know.

[21:16] There's something about being honest and authentic online that can actually be very helpful, too, as a creative process. It is a weird line to straddle.

Derek: [21:26] What I hear often is a risk-averse approach, which says, "Don't put anything online. Don't put yourself out there. Keep it private. Keep it locked down because you don't want to say something that's going to get you in trouble later."

[21:42] There is another way of looking at it that says that if you're not online and you're a professional and you're not engaged in scholarly or academic or professional communities, what does that say about you? Why aren't you there? I don't think the right answer is to always shut down and lock down, but to be really intentional about what you put out there and how you represent yourself.

Zoe: [22:06] One thing I would have loved to do with the class that we didn't do was to have blog posts online. This is coming from your work, with the cryptography class that you do, because I really think helping students understand that writing is a process and researching is a process is helpful when it's online.

[22:22] You can go back and look at that and make changes to it and work in a more public space because as scholars, we sit on stuff for so long. Getting an article out, it takes years. It's

such a weird way for knowledge to flow in this day and age. Showing the students there is that model, there is that very scholarly traditional model...not traditional.

[22:46] There is that way to communicate information, but there's also a way you can do it more publicly and openly, but still be smart about it, but also realize that there is a process and there is a benefit from sharing these things. You can see how your thoughts change over time. I go back and look at blog posts I wrote and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh! I should just take this down. This is horrible."

[23:09] At the same time, it's nice to see that, "Oh, this was me really trying to grapple with these issues." That will have to wait for a future course. I don't know. I might be TA-ing this well. We'll see. I'm still waiting on the news.

Derek: [23:24] If you're in the country. [laughs]

Zoe: [23:25] I'm definitely in the country now. The traveling is done. I'm grounded.

Derek: [23:30] You're grounded.

Zoe: [23:32] Yeah.

[23:32] [laughter]

Derek: [23:36] We've touched on this already a little bit, but as you think about technologies that you want to experiment with or adopt in your teaching, what are some principles you keep in mind? How do you make those decisions about what to try or what to use?

Zoe: [23:50] There's a few different things that I really look for. One is that if I'm going to use this, there has to be a rationale. The big critique that a lot of digital humanities gets, digital teaching, is that it's all flash, no substance.

[24:07] I think that's rarely the case, but I think people don't spend the time thinking about the rationale enough. That needs to be front and center about, "What are the benefits to the students? What are the benefits to the classroom? How is this helping me achieve X goals?"

[24:21] I also look for stuff that is a platform or a tool that...I don't want to be paying for

things. I want things to be free. I want it to be sustainable as much as possible. It's a very frustrating thing to spend all this time teaching the students to use something that a year from now might not be available or is not going to be accessible.

[24:46] I'm definitely trying to look at teaching them principles of how to evaluate the tools they're using and looking at what is the difference between the data and sources we're using versus these tools, to analyze and maybe visualize them.

[25:06] Lastly from that, this is a pet peeve of mine, just like design. An ugly website just kills me. I want to throw my phone at the wall. It doesn't do it for me. Just trying to find tools that really let you do what you want with them, that have enough flexibility and also have some eye to design.

[25:34] I really see it in the same way of research and teaching. They're so iterative. Design in digital teaching or humanities, you really can't have one without the other. That's a pet peeve of mine. I just don't like tools that are really poorly designed. They don't work well usually, anyway, so why would you use them?

Derek: [25:56] Are there other tools that you've either used or you find really interesting that you're thinking about using at some point in time?

Zoe: [26:03] You know me, I'm like a shiny object person. I want to try them all. For history, obviously, there's a lot of mapping. When you did the timelines this year as well, that, too, I would definitely integrate.

[26:20] The fun thing with those is oftentimes, the end point you get to is...not that it isn't great to use them, but you often end up with an actually pretty robust critique of what you've created, which I actually like to end at that point because it helps the students see these things not as flat or uncritical tools or websites or whatever form they come in, but something that all sorts of interpretive choices went into. That's really great.

[26:47] I'd like to do some Wikipedia more, just because my students use it so uncritically. Just getting them to realize how constructed that is would be really cool. I'd also love to get into...I'm not even sure I'd integrate this, but some of the augmented reality or maybe 3D printing, microprocessor, computing stuff, a lot of the maker culture would be really cool.

[27:14] History is such a text-based discipline. The weird thing is a lot of our sources can be film, can be pictures, can be radio. All of these different mediums...

Derek: [27:24] Sure, objects.

Zoe: [27:25] Right, exactly. Trying to integrate that more and push the students' understanding of what is historical or not, and also give them a chance to create as well. A lot of what I've thought about has come from listening to you talk of students as producers.

[27:42] I really like that idea of not foreclosing where the end point is on a project, but letting them have some creativity and learn some skills that is really going to be helpful. It's a tough balance between content and skills. We all struggle with that, but I do think there could be a little more experimentation in the history classroom.

[28:03] That's where I'm really at, of wanting to try and push the boundaries and see what's possible. Of course, I'm still TA-ing [laughs] so there's a limit to what I can do and these poor students already have so many courses going on. Hopefully, if a digital humanities course starts going in history, that would be a really fun place to blend...looking at these methods with also trying them out and understanding them.

Derek: [28:33] Looking ahead to your own career, you said you're rolling into your sixth year. You're getting close to finishing...

Zoe: [28:38] The end is nigh, hopefully. I don't know.

[28:40] [laughter]

Zoe: [28:41] It feels like there's a lot of writing to do.

[28:43] [laughter]

Derek: [28:43] There's still lots to do, I get that. As you think about possible next steps for you after you defend, what roles do you see technology play in your teaching, in your research, in your professional development?

Zoe: [28:58] Pretty central. Right now, this is a bit of a spoiler alert, but I actually just started

at the Nashville Software School in their part-time Web Developer Bootcamp. I'm spending the next year learning how to be a Web developer because for me, I really came down to where do you fall on this edtech divide?

[29:17] Are you someone that might be getting the grants and helping other people build the tools or are you interested in building the tools yourself? It turned out that I'm just crazy enough to think I can build these things. [laughs]

[29:30] What I would like to see in my career is definitely continue in the digital humanities in some form or another, maybe as a professor, maybe as a staff member, but really starting to build more tools for our community.

[29:43] A lot of the tools we have are really repurposed from other, not less savory contexts, but there's a lot of ways where we use...the way we create and understand knowledge is not the same as like someone who is looking for business insights or any of these big data companies.

[30:04] I would really love to build new research tools and hopefully expand how we integrate digital tools. I feel like in some ways, we're almost in the early dot-com boom of digital humanities, where there's a lot of promise and we're still trying to catch up there.

[30:24] We will get there eventually, but right now the frustrating thing for a lot of people is the limitations in these tools and the way they were designed and the fact that you either have to spend so much money to get access or you can't share things.

[30:39] My big beef is that historians do not share archival data really well, which I've just spent the last few years having to travel to these archives and sitting next to people taking picture after picture. It's just like, "Why aren't we sharing these things?" It seems like a really weird inefficiency if these are all in some digital form.

[30:57] Just trying to integrate more thoughtfully the digital already into how we work and then from there, try and see what type of research we can do and see what type of questions...There's a great...Cameron Blevins is this historian who has a great blog.

[31:14] He's historying, like the verb. I don't... [laughs]

[31:18] [crosstalk]

Zoe: [31:19] on twitter but he has this great thing about the promise of digital humanities and about how a lot of people have been really excited for this, but haven't really gone the next step of really integrating it and pushing forward research boundaries or trying to push for new avenues.

[31:37] That still needs to be done. The hard thing is we're captives to our own claims of what this can do, but then we actually have to show that and push it forward. That's where I'd like to be. Right now, the job market is so [laughs] interesting for academics and historians. I would love still to teach and do that.

[32:00] We could touch on a whole set of issues that I'm sure you could talk about, about being at a center, but not necessarily...the weird dual stream where you have like an appointment in the department or you teach in a department, but you're based at a center and what that means for your ability in a campus to enact change.

Derek: [32:19] Whether you're faculty, whether you're staff and what those implications are.

Zoe: [32:23] Right. Right. Also, ownership of IP and stuff like this. This is something where, now that I'm starting to build things, is a very different way of thinking about my output and the value of it and its relationship to the university. That's a whole...another podcast.

[32:41] [laughter]

Zoe: [32:42] A second podcast. That's where I'm at right now. Hopefully I'll finish in the next year or two. I'm lucky enough to not have a gun to my head with the funding situation. Now, I'm actually starting to integrate more text mining and mapping tools into my dissertation just to deal with the sheer amount of data I have. I'm also excited to see what kind of research spins out of that.

Derek: [33:10] Yeah?

Zoe: [33:11] Yeah.

Derek: [33:12] We have one question we ask all of our guests. What's your favorite analog

educational technology?

Zoe: [33:20] Oh, man. I was telling you earlier, it's so funny because we treat analog as just, "That's the natural classroom. This is how it's looked for eons." [laughs] This is going to sound so bad, but candy is one I really love because it really does...you know, the simple incentives, students just...they fall for it every time. They get really engaged.

Derek: [33:43] It's kind of a biotechnology.

Zoe: [33:45] Yeah, maybe halfway in between. Besides that, I would say, definitely a nice table where everyone could sit around. That's the ideal. Of course, most lecture classrooms can't accommodate that, but you're fixing that with the flip classroom stuff.

Derek: [34:06] [laughs] We're trying.

Zoe: [34:07] We can just...Yeah, get the lectures outside of the classroom, but...

Derek: [34:11] Where can we find you online, Zoe?

Zoe: [34:14] Yes. Twitter, @zoe_leblanc. I actually, also, own zoeleblanc but I can't get into.

[34:20] [laughter]

Zoe: [34:21] It's just a picture of me at five which is...

[34:24] [laughter]

Zoe: [34:24] It's weird [laughs] sort of account.

Derek: [34:26] I have two versions of me on Facebook.

Zoe: [34:29] Really?

Derek: [34:30] Because I joined when I was teaching at Harvard and I used my Harvard email address when Facebook was just getting started and then when I moved to Vanderbilt...

Zoe: [34:36] You were part of the early days?

Derek: [34:38] I was. I was in the first 2,000 users, but then I moved to Vanderbilt and when I changed my email, somehow it forked my account. Now there's like a ghost version of Derek still on Facebook somewhere.

Zoe: [34:49] [laughs] Evil Derek. [laughs]

Derek: [34:51] He's only got three friends so he must not be very likable.

Zoe: [34:53] Yeah, definitely evil.

[34:54] [laughter]

Zoe: [34:55] Yeah. There's Twitter and then my website. It's just zoelablanc.com and you can find all my email address, poorly written blog posts, they're all there for you.

Derek: [35:06] Zoe, this has been a great conversation. Thanks for chatting with us about digital pedagogy.

[35:11] [background music]

Zoe: [35:11] It's been my absolute pleasure Derek and I'm really looking forward to hearing this podcast, so thank you.

Derek: [35:18] That was Zoe LeBlanc, a doctoral student in history at Vanderbilt University. Zoe is so thoughtful about digital pedagogy and I'm glad we could feature her on the podcast.

[35:27] In the show notes, you'll find links to Zoe's website, her twitter account, the HASTAC Network, Vanderbilt's new Center for Digital Humanities and a couple of other resources that Zoe and I mentioned. You can find those show notes on our website, leadinglinespod.com.

[35:41] You can also find us on Twitter, where our handle is @leadinglinespod. Leading Lines is produced by the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, The Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning, the Office of Scholarly Communications at the Vanderbilt Library and the Associate Provost for Digital Learning.

[35:54] [background music]

Derek: [35:54] Look for new episodes the first and third Monday of each month. I'm your host, Derek Bruff. Thanks for listening.