

# Transcript

[0:01] (music)

**Derek Bruff:** [0:05] This is Leading Lines. I'm Derek Bruff. Sometime in the last couple of years, my nine-year-old stepson started watching YouTube videos in which people played through some of his favorite games, offering lively commentary as they did. I kept wondering, why doesn't he play these games himself? Why would he want to watch others play some of his favorite games?

[0:26] I have my theories, some of which probably come from my experience playing video games as a nine-year-old when there was no internet. However, Leading Lines producer, Cliff Anderson, recently talked with someone who has actually studied this phenomenon and how these play through videos are a form of pedagogy.

[0:42] Michael Dezuanni is associate professor of communication at Queensland University of Technology in Australia and associate director of the Digital Media Research Centre in Queensland. His research focuses on digital media, literacies and learning in a variety of contexts, and he's author and editor of numerous articles and books, including *Serious Play: Literacy, Learning and Digital Games*, a book he coedited with Catherine Beavis and Joanne O'Mara, published in 2017 by Routledge Press.

[1:13] Leading Lines producer, Cliff Anderson, talked with Dezuanni about his newest book, *Peer Pedagogies on Digital Platforms: Learning with Minecraft Let's Play Videos*, published in 2020 by MIT Press. Dezuanni shares some of the findings from his studies of Let's Play videos. Those are the videos I've been calling "play throughs" for years, including ways that children learn from peers and near peers in this very particular learning context. He and Cliff also talk about implications for teaching digital media literacy in other contexts and about the troubles with YouTube comment policies. (music)

**Cliff Anderson:** [1:49] Welcome, Michael.

**Michael Dezuanni:** [1:52] Thanks so much, Cliff. It's really fantastic to have the opportunity to talk about the book and to be welcomed onto the podcast.

**Cliff:** [2:02] We're really glad to have you. So why don't we just start with an introduction to the genre of Let's Play videos. I think anyone who has kids that are maybe in the preteen to early teens knows what these videos are, but a lot of our audience may never have heard of them. So can you give our audience a short sketch of what these videos are like?

**Michael:** [2:21] Absolutely. So I've focused specifically on Minecraft Let's Play videos, but the Let's Play genre, in general, has some kind of common features. And what you typically find is someone who's recording their own game play and commentating on that game play as it proceeds. And I think the really distinctive feature about Let's Plays is that the commentary is meant to be entertaining in its own right and really relates to the personality of the player.

[2:58] So while the focus of the Let's Play might be a certain aspect of game play and certainly the game is being played and it unfolds as you might expect. The entertainment comes as much from the commentary over the top of the video. These videos vary in length, but the number that I looked at would typically be between about 20-30 minutes in length. They're often quite episodic so that each day a gamer will upload an episode of their video. And these videos are often sequenced to tell a loose story or they might be based on a general kind of theme of sorts.

[3:53] So they're really kind of fascinating in the sense that they're clearly a highly popular form of entertainment for children. One of the things I think is fascinating is that children are so interested in watching other people play games. And Let's Plays have certainly been one of the genres that has, I guess, pulled children away from what we might understand to be traditional television, more towards born digital genres that have emerged on YouTube, in particular, as a platform.

**Cliff:** [4:34] Well this leads into a question that I think every adult who sees children watching these videos ask themselves, which is, why don't the kids like to play the games themselves and watch someone else play it? And I think in a way your book serves kind of as an answer to that implicit criticism. At least that was the way that I read it. It was a kind of exploration of why kids are drawn into these videos and why they don't want to just move on from the

video to just play by themselves, or only play it by themselves?

**Michael:** [5:05] Yeah. Well, look, I mean, I think they do both. I think very typically, particularly with Minecraft, children are doing both. And I think one of the really fascinating things that's going on here is that if you think about this in kind of a historical context, this is the first time that children on a massive scale have been able to make their own media content on a platform like Minecraft.

[5:46] So Minecraft as game, one of the main reasons it's popular is because it enables children to build and to create scenarios, to create their own buildings, and so on and so forth. And so it becomes a kind of media production space for them in a sense. And so this is happening on a massive scale by millions of children all over the world. And at the same time, they're able to go on to YouTube, which is highly popular with children. And they're able to see other people using Minecraft in similar ways to what they're interested in or in different ways.

[6:19] And so Minecraft becomes a kind of inspiration for them to be able to go back to Minecraft themselves and make their own builds. So I think there's a lot of switching back and forth between children's own Minecraft production and their viewing of Minecraft videos. I'm sure there are periods of time when some children just watch, Let's Play videos and don't go back to playing themselves. But I think typically they do come back around to playing themselves.

[6:49] So that's kind of, that's part of the long answer. I think. On a more straightforward level, it's the most straightforward answer is that the YouTube videos teach kids how to become Minecrafters. They pick up tips and tricks, and learn how to play Minecraft more effectively themselves. But the thing that emerged for me when I was doing the research for this book, is that there's also definitely a friendship element here, so that the children who are watching these Let's Play videos begin to identify Let's Players as kind of friends or companions.

[7:34] So that even though they don't meet them in real life, they are able to post comments on YouTube videos. They're able to make fan art. They're able to make their own Minecraft creations and share them back to the Let's Player. And there's a sense that there's this kind of intimate connection that emerges between the fan and the Let's Player. So in that sense, this is why in which Lets Players become kind of like companions or friends for fans.

**Cliff:** [8:19] Yeah, I'd love to explore that dynamic a little bit further as we go on, because I think it's a really interesting point that you make about the connection and sense of authentic connection versus sometimes inauthentic connection, which I want to get into a little bit more. But you know this idea of kids teaching each other, you use the term peer pedagogy. And you note that it differs from the sort of traditional hierarchical instruction. So peer pedagogy, could you just give us a succinct definition of what you mean by that?

**Michael:** [8:52] Yes. So I was really searching for a way to explain this relationship that develops between a Let's Player and a fan and the kind of teaching arrangement that exists there. So, I mean, we often think about the concept of pedagogy being related to formal classroom environments. And certainly historically, pedagogy is a term that has come to be associated with the profession of teaching and in university contexts, for instance, we think about pedagogy as being the kind of science of teaching.

[9:33] But there's actually a really convincing alternative kind of theorization of pedagogy that exists in the research literature, which is about the ways in which we're always learning and we're learning on a daily basis. We learn from our parents, we learn from our friends and family members. There's a very convincing set of literature about how the media performs pedagogical functions. And, you know, there's been a lot of attention, kind of focused on the various ways in which the media might influence through a kind of teaching how to behave and what to think and so on.

[10:18] So I was, you know, I think I wanted to describe this relationship in pedagogical terms. I hesitated over using the term peer initially because I guess peer suggests someone who's is in your age range or someone who's on a kind of equal footing with you. And certainly, ultimately, I don't want to suggest that Let's Players and their fans are completely on equal footing. But what I do want to suggest is that the hierarchy is broken down somewhat and is challenged.

[10:58] So the kind of learning relationship that you have with a teacher in a classroom is quite different to the learning arrangement that you have with a Let's Player, if you're a child fan of that Let's Player. And there's another layer to this in that Let's Players try to break down social distance between themselves and their fans. They want to come across as being everyday people. They want to be, seem to be kind of authentic in that sense.

[11:29] So I feel comfortable using the term peer in that way as a kind of provocation to get

us thinking about the nature of this sort of semi-democratic relationship that exists. So that's why I put the two together, peer pedagogies. Look, I think that it's pointing to the idea that children feel like they can learn from Let's Players because they kind of feel intimately connected to them. They feel respected by Let's Players and they really value what Let's Players can teach them.

**Cliff:** [12:12] So this seems like a perfect segue into the creators that you featured. And if I've got them right, stampylongnose, aka Joseph Garrett, StacyPlays, who also in real life, Stacy Hinojosa and KarinaOMG or GamerGirl, who is Karina Kurzawa.

**Michael:** [12:31] Yes.

**Cliff:** [12:32] And it's interesting that you chose these three because although they all play Minecraft, they're quite different and their skills and what they're imparting in their videos are also in some sense distinct and it's interesting how you go into that. I'm curious, also, there are more popular Minecraft players. You mentioned, of course, along the way, DanTDM or popular MMOs and others. So what led you to choose these particular three? Stampy is probably the best known of the three, at least to me, but I'm an adult. What do I know, right? (laughs) But, you know, what led you to identify these three as really the ones that you want to profile?

**Michael:** [13:09] So the reason for choosing these three Let's Players is a really interesting question, I think. One of the reasons I chose stampylonghead and StacyPlays was because they both have made attempts to be more formal in the kinds of things they teach. So Stampy, for instance, at one point, had a contract with YouTube to produce a series called Wonder Quest, which was to feature on, which did feature on the YouTube Kids App.

[13:41] And the idea was to take Stampy's popularity with children and turn it towards teaching curriculum concepts, typical science and mathematics concepts and so on. So because I'm interested in learning, I was super interested in the shift from this focus on more informal teaching about Minecraft to trying to teach these more recognizable curriculum content ideas.

[14:09] Stacy has done this in a different kind of way in that she has also tried to use her popularity to encourage children to read, for instance. So she has a whole series which focuses on books. And she creates builds around particular books and she's created the kind

of book club for children to introduce them to interesting examples of literature from throughout history. So again, I was interested in this dynamic between her everyday kind of entertainment videos and these more formal videos. Stacy has also emerged as a popular author in her own right. And I think that's another really interesting characteristic there.

[14:59] So I had those two and then I really thought carefully about or who would I want to include as my third case study. And I thought it was really important to include a younger Let's Player. So Karina, when I began the study, was 12, she's now 13 going on 14 and is massively popular, particularly her non-gaming channel Sis vs Bro, which she runs with her brother Ronald. It has a massive following. So I really wanted to understand her as a Let's Player, but also as a broader social media entertainer. And the ways in which her popularity on other channels and other social media platforms also fed into her Let's Play popularity.

[15:51] So, you know, I think that's the reason I chose the three. I was interested in Stampy because he was one of the pioneers and was kind of there from the start and in some respects helped to kind of define at least the sort of family friendly Minecraft Let's Play genre.

**Cliff:** [16:10] I mean, I have to say, I love watching him because he's a great entertainer as well as a great game player.

**Michael:** [16:17] Yeah.

**Cliff:** [16:19] But so one of the things that I think that unites these three, in the way that you talk about them is that they're also interested, in some broad sense and maybe not explicitly theorized in Karina's case, in the moral formation of their followers. I mean, so Stampy is explicitly trying to model good behavior and the way that you play well with friends in his videos and he's explicitly doing that. And StacyPlays is also concerned with the relationships between human beings and animals, particularly dogs.

[16:52] And then I think you indicated that Karina does this implicitly in a sense just because she's a really good older sister to her brother and sort of serves as a model for what a sibling relationship might look like. So they are all in some ways united by that interest in moral formation, whereas that's not necessarily the case with other Let's Players, at least the way that I read your text.

**Michael:** [17:14] I think that's absolutely true, too. Yeah. I mean, I think that this is part of the kind of way in which each of these, Let's Players aims to be authentic or is simply authentic and why they have emerged as popular Let's Players, but yeah, that's absolutely correct. I mean, Stampy is very explicit about this to the point where he has recorded lots of videos as part of a series he calls, "Let's Talk," which are videos where he speaks directly to the camera and kind of gives advice to his young followers. And often this advice is about good behavior on YouTube. Or it is sometimes an extension of the way in which he's trying to teach children to be more effective YouTubers by giving them hints and tips and so on in a more direct fashion, but more often than not, it's very much his kind of adult persona coming through, I think.

[18:19] And him wanting to be kind of responsible and using his popularity to try and teach kind of good behavior online. Stacy, certainly, her whole focus is on kind of ethical practice around pet ownership and the good treatment of animals. One of the reasons she's so interesting is because she has online versions of her real-world pets. So she has a number of rescue dogs and so on. And these become key characters within her videos. She has a lot more kind of pets online as well, and lots more animal characters online as well in addition to that kind of core group. But this really becomes a focus for her in terms of teaching children how to think about pet ownership and how to care for pets and so on and so forth.

[19:24] It's actually gotten her into trouble a couple of times with her fans actually, because one of the examples I use in the book is an instance where she runs a kind of dog show for her dogs in one of the episodes and she kind of puts them through their paces through this obstacle course. And the particular mod of Minecraft that she uses actually means that blood appears on the animals when they become injured. So as she's getting her pets to go through this obstacle course, some of them do become injured and end up with blood on them and so on.

[20:13] And her fans really reacted very negatively to that and kind of called her out for sort of being cruel to her animals and so on. It's this really visceral moment actually where you can kind of see her fan community pulling her back into line and sort of insisting that she practice those good ethical standards that she's setting up and talking about throughout the rest of her videos. And I think this, I know we're going to get on this concept of authenticity, but this is where this idea of authenticity is really important. If, you know, if you're not consistent and if you're not being true to yourself and true to your audience and you become less authentic in the eyes of your audience, that can be, that can spell disaster for you as a

Let's Player actually.

**Cliff:** [21:12] Actually, this is exactly where I want to jump in on that notion. Because you mentioned that Stampy wanted to use his popularity to certain didactic ends and was sharing sort of his views on the way that YouTube works and the way that people should engage online. But he also, as you mentioned, developed the series Wonder Quest, which didn't actually turn out to be all that popular. And I think one of the things that you point to is this relationship of authenticity simply can't be used in an instrumental way. I mean, it has to emerge from the nature of the videos and it can't be wielded like an instrument to direct kids into more traditional learning environments. It seems like one of the things that you include in your book.

**Michael:** [21:58] Absolutely. I mean, there's actually a long history of course, of educationalists wanting to bring educational software into the classroom or wanting to use digital games in the classroom to motivate children. So we see this process play out where because teachers and other adults are seeing, the ways in which games engage children, they think that that can be then turned to more direct educational outcomes. And I think in some respects, Stampy falls victim to this.

[22:34] So there are several interviews of him online around the time of the launch of Wonder Quest, where he's talking about how he wants to use his popularity to really teach kids and how he's going to use his typical Minecraft techniques and his Minecraft play to really turn kids on to mathematical concepts or science concepts and so on. But the problem is that it just doesn't come across as him being himself. You know, it does come across as suddenly Stampy's not like my kind of big brother or older friend who I'm kind of hanging out with and having fun and just enjoying his regular build. Suddenly he's reminding me that there's schoolwork in the world, you know, and that school's important. And I think just for his fans, it didn't kind of really come off. The videos still get quite a few views, but nowhere near the number of views that his typical videos get.

**Cliff:** [23:44] It's interesting because where he is very successful is I think in teaching kids in those videos where he's talking about media literacy, if you want to put it in our terms. Because I think that kids come away from those videos being able to recognize, for example, when they're being exposed to clickbait or sort of manipulative tactics to get them to watch videos simply for the likes and all the other metrics that YouTube records. And Stampy, of course, is critical of that and teaches kids to recognize that. And I wonder, because I think you



have a passage that really speaks to this on page 173. If you'd be willing to just read a short section of your book on this topic.

**Michael:** [24:28] Yeah, really happy to. So I say, *the real challenge for media literacy advocates will be how to have authentic and meaningful conversations with children about micro celebrities that ring true, indeed, that are authentic in ways that rival how social relationships with micro celebrities are authentic to children and young people. This will require adults, parents, teachers, researchers, and other concerned citizens, to take YouTube and gaming culture seriously, not to criticize or judge it as trivial, but to understand why it plays such an important role in children's lives. We can learn a great deal from social media entertainers like Stampy, StacyPlays, and KarinaOMG, not just about Minecraft and the Let's Play genre, but potentially about how to approach media literacy education in digital times.*

**Cliff:** [25:25] I mean, I think that's extremely well said and I'm a librarian and as a librarian we certainly think of ourselves as teaching information literacy and how to engage with potentially propagandistic sources. But there's a way in which that just naturally emerges from being exposed to these videos. And for people that actually take the time and the care to differentiate between the authentic and the inauthentic or even sort of the manipulative. And I see this in my own son. And it's great to see this happening on a larger scale with kids who are watching these videos.

**Michael:** [26:04] Yeah, I mean, I think this was somewhat surprising to me too I think. So I'm a lifelong media literacy educator. I began as a high school teacher teaching media literacy classes. And I've always been fascinated and interested in how we can help young people to think more critically about their media use. So in a way I wasn't expecting when I began researching these YouTubers to see a form of sort of critical media literacy coming through in at least some of these videos.

[26:43] Obviously it isn't always there and often the videos are just straight entertainment and aren't making commentary and so on. But it's surprising the extent to which within the commentary that these Let's Players are making, the extent to which these kind of messages come through, the extent to which there's this aim of trying to help, at least these young audience members to think a little more carefully about the media they're consuming and so on. So that might be about Minecraft itself.

[27:20] So Stampy, for instance, at times is quite critical of decisions that are made about

Minecraft. And the way that Minecraft itself as a game has changed over time and the various versions of the game have been made available to players in certain ways and so on and so forth. So he's kind of made critical commentary on the platform. But he's also made these other comments about just YouTube culture, in more general.

[27:54] I think Stacy isn't quite as explicit about teaching about the internet, but she's certainly explicit about being a good citizen or thinking carefully about how you're acting and behaving in life in general, and then extended onto digital platforms.

[28:15] I think Karina certainly isn't setting out to teach younger kids because she's quite young herself. But I do think she models the kind of good behavior towards her brother that's really interesting and you know, is quite encouraging in a way to see. The passage I just read follows on from, I guess some more depressing focus in the book on the fact that Peer Pedagogies don't have to be positive, right? There are lots of examples out there of YouTubers who are influencing in negative kinds of ways or who are doing things on Minecraft, for instance, that are quite harmful or risky or not very nice to other people.

[29:10] And so I guess I'm suggesting here that in a sense, these questions need to be raised within the authentic perimeters of all of this activity. It is difficult as teachers and as adults to kind of take children out of that context and teach them about internet culture in authentic ways in a classroom. It's an ongoing challenge that I don't think we've yet solved. So I guess I'm just suggesting that these YouTubers are providing us with some examples or some insights into how we might be able to achieve this in more satisfactory ways

**Cliff:** [29:55] I'd like to ask you a question, a couple questions about topics that you don't cover, at least to my reading in the book. But one is the interaction that goes on with fans when they're live streaming rather than recording. And the comments are running alongside and they sometimes interact directly with the comments from their fans in the game. I'm curious. It seemed like, at least, maybe I missed it, but it seemed like you didn't cover that particular form of engagement, the live streaming versus the recorded. I'm wondering what prompted you to sort of separate those out?

**Michael:** [30:34] Yes. I do think the live streaming phenomenon is practice, it's a separate form of practice that deserves its own really in-depth study. And so I had to have some parameters around what I would focus on in this study. So I chose to just focus on a particular kind of Let's Play video that is about family-friendly, Let's Players who are typically

using Minecraft. But of course, there's all of this massive amount of activity happening on platforms like Twitch, which children are equally attracted to. I guess I feel like that needs to be a separate study.

**Cliff:** [31:22] I think that's very fair. I mean, you're right. That's a huge topic area in and of itself. The other thing that I wonder about is these communities of Minecrafters that seem to share values and to interact with each other, but in a sort of closed off world. And the one that comes to mind most immediately is HermitCraft. And you mentioned some of the people that are on HermitCraft, like Grian and Mumbo Jumbo and their own specialties. But I wonder about these communities in which kids kind of sort of project themselves into those communities, not just a relationship with an individual, but a relationship with this set of people that that occasionally overlap and interact with each other.

**Michael:** [32:01] Yeah. So look, I think that's also equally, it's an equally fascinating topic to focus on. And I think that you can really look at the ways in which affinity practices emerge within those spaces. And by affinity practices I mean, the ways in which the community becomes kind of self-sustaining. And the ways in which members of those communities are helping to shape each other's practice. They're helping to give each other insights into how to play Minecraft in particular kinds of ways.

[32:43] I think often what you see emerge on those platforms is quite niche practices or focus on a certain set of concerns and so. But again, I didn't look at that in detail because again, I feel like that is also another study, right? It's another, it's something that deserves, you know, you could write a book on that, right?

**Cliff:** [33:08] (laughs) There's a lot of work to be done in this field, which is quite fantastic that you started people thinking about these questions.

**Michael:** [33:16] I think in relation to that, you know, one of the things that's really, I mean, we need more research, right? We, one of the reasons I wrote the book is because there's been such a dearth of research on children's entertainment in digital contexts. Most of the research that exists about children in particular, if it pertains to one side, but about children is it focuses on, perhaps, their sort of socialization in virtual environments. It maybe focuses on the connections to learning and so on and so forth.

[33:54] But there are very few studies that actually set out to just look at a particular

entertainment form and to really understand why that form is popular with kids. So I think the examples you're providing, you know, they deserve their own studies and we just need to see a lot more of this kind of research activity to understand the subtle differences in the various ways in which children are being entertained in a whole host of different kinds of ways online now that just didn't exist five or ten years ago.

**Cliff:** [34:31] And just again, to sort of open up other research questions, I'm curious about the way in which children's experience in this kind of pure pedagogy translates into perhaps adults experiencing the same types of peer pedagogy. And the person who comes immediately to mind, but it probably portrays my own interests, is Dan Shiffman in his show *The Coding Train*, in which you actually have adults and children I think following along and learning from his videos, learning to program in JavaScript, but in such an entertaining way and you know, it's the opposite of didactic and yet he's a fantastic instructor as well. But he's done this by developing a community and helping people to figure out the problems with him.

**Michael:** [35:17] Yeah, look, I think that, you know, I think the kinds of principles I've outlined in the book can be applied to other examples like this. And it's really where I, you know, in some respects where I would like to go next is to really understand how this concept of peer pedagogies can be applied to other examples like this. Because as you say, these principles around seeming peer like, being authentic, creating this community, and seeming to be approachable, at least from a fan's perspective and so on, I think are really at the heart of why we see particular social media entertainers emerge and why they become popular.

[36:08] And why what they're doing actually works and, they do become really interesting alternative spaces of learning. Whether it's, that's occurring in more formal kind of semi-didactic ways or whether it's happening at a much, much looser, less specific kind of way. So couldn't agree more. And I'm just kind of thinking about where I take this research next. I think I'll be wanting to push into those kinds of areas.

**Cliff:** [36:39] Well, actually, I'd love to talk to you just as we conclude our conversation together about your own research process. Because I gather one of the things that you did was you downloaded the comments on these particular videos that you studied. And then you did a textual analysis to sort of classify and see how people were responding in those comments. So can you talk a little bit about the way you use text mining as a tool in your own research?

**Michael:** [37:03] Yes. So I guess there were three parts to the process, as you say, one was a kind of textual analysis of the videos. So I did a close read of quite a number of videos and a kind of broader rate of several 100 more videos just to see if what I was thinking, to see if what I thought was emerging, was actually emerging. But then yes, I was very interested in the comments on YouTube videos because that's where I was seeing a lot of this kind of sense of friendship playing out and the sense of intimate connection playing out.

[37:46] So all of these comments that these children would be posting on a particular StacyPlays video, for instance, would be, you know, talking to her as if she was a kind of friend. And the comments also, the commenters would be commenting on each other's comments too, in this sort of formation of a community online. So I simply used a scraping tool to pull those comments down and bring them into an Excel spreadsheet. And then I went through and read them, read every comment, and started highlighting key terms just in a typical kind of coding fashion.

[38:34] And then when I saw particular ideas emerging, I did some searches as well just to see how often particular terms were coming up and so this then sort of led me to understand in a bit more detail, the kinds of ideas that were emerging or the patterns that were emerging in those comments.

[38:56] One of the things that's actually happened since I conducted some of that research is that YouTube has actually disabled comments on lots of videos that are targeted towards children. So this is something they started to do as early as 2018, and then kind of accelerated the process throughout 2019 and by 2020, I think the first of January 2020, the idea was that there would be no comments allowed on videos that were perceived to be addressed to children under 13.

[39:35] And this has been very contentious, of course, amongst YouTubers and certainly amongst, Let's Players. So at one point, Stacy, for instance, posted a video in her Stacy Talks series where she basically said goodbye to people. And sort of said, yes, I'll still be posting my videos, but you'll no longer be able to comment on my videos. And she pointed out that this would be a real loss for the ways in which she could interact with fans.

[40:08] So I think that's all really interesting in its own right, because it's about the kinds of entertainments spaces that are available for children online and the ways in which they're controlled and regulated and what children have a right to do as opposed to the ways in

which perhaps we need to protect them online as well.

**Cliff:** [40:33] And I mean, there's so much to talk about there too. I first learned about that move from my own son, who was asking me to sign a petition online against the change in policy, (laughs) which I thought was actually kind of fantastic that he was following along with, you know, how these media were developing and wanted to make an intervention. But it's also interesting in, and again, would be interesting to study, I think, how some of that conversation has moved to other places, like Discord, for example, and the communities that form there as well. They're running alongside and sometimes by the Let's Players themselves.

**Michael:** [41:11] Absolutely, yes. So, it definitely would be super cool to check that out and it's there's not enough hours in the day, Cliff. I would just love to be able to do all of these projects and yeah, it's just impossible to pursue every avenue, but I couldn't agree more. I think the conversation has gone to other places and it's kind of, this is one of the reasons it's so disappointing that YouTube hasn't found a way to sensibly allow children to keep commenting on YouTube's videos because we know that that discussion will just go elsewhere and maybe even less regulated or whatever the case is.

[41:59] Yeah, these are challenges. There's actually a big challenge for the tech companies, I think in relation to how they deal with children under 13 because for a long time they have kind of just, you know, had the line that their platforms aren't intended for kids under 13, even though everyone knows that many millions of children have been watching YouTube videos on the main YouTube platform for many years now.

**Cliff:** [42:31] Well, this has been a really wonderful conversation and we have a question that we like to ask our guests at the end of our podcast episodes and we've changed it for 2020 just because this has been such an unusual year. I hope it's going better for you in Australia than it is for us in the United States. Nevertheless, the question is, what have you learned about educational technology during 2020, whether you taught remotely or online or in a hybrid modality that will continue to inform your teaching when we're all back in the classroom. And as I say, you may be back in the classroom already and that's wonderful. But what did you learn from the experience that will stay with you?

**Michael:** [43:08] So one of the areas that our research is digital inclusion and the digital

divide. And for me, the biggest takeaway from 2020 has been that we have always known that there's a group of kids who really struggled to be online. And the pandemic has really clearly brought attention and focus to this group now. So that, you know, if you're not well connected, if you can't afford to be on the internet, or if you don't have the kind of device that you need to access your schoolwork and so on, then you are at a severe disadvantage whether there's a pandemic or not.

[43:54] So I think that's been my biggest takeaway. It's something that I'm about to begin to address in a new piece of research that we'll be doing over the next three years, which will focus on low-income families here in Australia and how they deal with being disconnected. So I think that's a really crucial piece of work that needs to occur and we'd be doing it anyway, but I think the pandemic has just made it even more urgent.

**Cliff:** [44:28] Well, Michael Dezuanni, thank you so much for joining us. I really enjoyed our conversation and I hope other people will pick up and read your book, which as I say, it's out from MIT Press. So thank you so much.

**Michael:** [44:42] Thanks, Cliff. It's been absolutely fantastic and thanks for having me on the podcast. (music)

**Derek:** [44:49] That was Michael Dezuanni, associate professor of communication and associate director of the Digital Media Research Center at Queensland University of Technology. Thanks to Leading Lines producer, all-star librarian, and budding YouTuber, Cliff Anderson, for that interview. I have a lot more context from stepson's YouTube consumption now. I was also reminded, during that interview, that my oldest child, who's now 17, used to watch one of those Let's Players that Dezuanni studied, StampyLongHead, better known to my daughter as StampyCat. I've heard Stampy's voice come out of my desktop and her iPad many times in the past.

[45:27] If you'd like to learn more about Michael Dezuanni and his work, including his new book, *Peer Pedagogies on Digital Platforms*, check the show notes for links. And if you have some thoughts on how the peer pedagogies seen in Let's Play videos might inform the teaching we do in colleges and universities, please share.

[45:44] You can find us on Twitter @leadinglinespod and on the web at [leadinglinespod.com](https://leadinglinespod.com). Leading Lines is produced by the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and The Jean and Alexander

Heard libraries. This episode was edited by Rhett McDaniel. Look for new episodes when we publish them. I'm your host, Derek Bruff. Thanks for listening and be safe. (music)