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# *The Journal of Social Media for Learning*

*Special Conference Edition*

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The Journal of Social Media for Learning 2022

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## **Editorial**

*Claire Timmins, Sarah Honeychurch, Suzanne Faulkner and Tracy Atkinson*

We had such plans for 2020 - Tunnocks Teacakes; haggis, neeps and tatties; Tennents lager - we were going to show our delegates how Weegies live the high life.

The pandemic and lockdown put paid to all of our carefully laid plans to host the conference in person, but we were determined not to let the year pass without marking the event somehow. We knew we needed to be realistic - we were all stressed and overworked, and we knew that everyone else was as well - but we also knew how much we were going to need our community celebration when the end of the year came. So, we put our collective heads together and formulated a cunning plan for a Tweetposium.

The event exceeded our expectations - we had eleven presentations, which we have collated into a Wakelet. We also contacted all of the presenters and offered the opportunity to write about the experience for this special issue of The Journal of Social Media for Learning. Understandably, some were too busy to take up the offer, but we're thrilled to have some reflective pieces written especially for this edition.

First, we have a write-up from our very own mascot Hamish (written with help from Sarah and Suzanne) about his whistle-stop tour of Glasgow. Second, Tyne Stanley from the Open University Library writes about some resources that the Open University have been developing to support educators in designing inclusive approaches to social media, with links to resources open to anyone to use. Third is Kiu Sum, who writes a reflective piece about her journey from tweeting as an individual to tweet-presenting at the Tweetposium. Fourth is another reflective piece, this time from Nina Walker, who tells readers how much she benefited from the experience. Finally, Sarah shares some thoughts about identity on social media and the importance of a supportive audience.

We would like to thank all of you - presenters, steering group members and participants - for making SocMedHE a rewarding and enriching experience.

We hope you all enjoy reading the papers in this special edition of the journal as much as we did.

*Claire, Sarah, Suzanne and Tracey*

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## Hamish the Coo

*Suzanne Faulkner<sup>1</sup> and Sarah Honeychurch<sup>2</sup>*

*<sup>1</sup>The University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK*

*<sup>2</sup>The University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK*



Each SOCMEDHE conference has its mascot. For SOCMEDHE20 our mascot, Hamish the Coo, also acted as our tour guide. We were disappointed not to be able to host in person last year, as we were looking forward to showing off our wonderful city, so Suzanne and Sarah asked Hamish for his help. Throughout the day our valiant little helper trotted around the city, stopping at some of his favourite landmarks and asking kindly passers-by to help him take some selfies. We tweeted these out from the SocMedHE account and, as a bonus, asked delegates to work out where Hamish was and to submit their answers to win a prize.

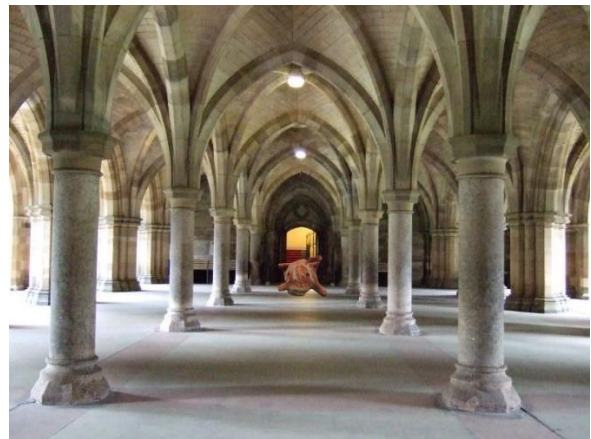
Hamish started his tour of Glasgow over the [Met Tower](#), with a modified version of the Glasgow slogan “people make Glasgow”.





He then made a giant leap up to the west end of Glasgow, to the [Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum](#).

From there it's just a hop, skip and a jump up to the [University of Glasgow Cloisters](#) (pedants will point out this is an undercroft, of course).



Then he wandered down to the Clyde, to the [Tall Ship at the Riverside Museum](#).

Next for some entertainment - just along the Clyde is the [Hydro](#).







And right next to that is the SEC, known locally as the [Armadillo](#).

Time to hit the toon centre - here he is outside [Glasgow Buchanan St Subway](#) - or, as we call it the Clockwork Orange.



While on Buchanan Street, Hamish paused to say hello to [Donald Dewar](#) outside the Royal Concert Hall.

Next a steep walk up to the [Necropolis](#). Hamish was tired after all that walking, so he paused to munch on some tasty grass.





Back down the hill, and time for another museum - this time the [Gallery of Modern Art](#) and the statue of the Duke of Wellington, adorned as usual with his traffic cone.

And a final visit - to the [Cenotaph at George Square](#), a good place to stop.



Throughout the day, as we were tweeting out the pics of Hamish, we also challenged everyone watching to work out each of the locations, and promised there would be a surprise prize for the person who got the most of them right. At the end of the day, we were delighted that Kiu was the winner. The prize, of course, was Hamish himself. Here he is in his new home with his new pal Baaanedit.

We had a lot of fun watching Hamish stoat around our wonderful city, and we hope you enjoyed the virtual tour. Of course, we still hope to show you around in person one day, and feed you Tunnocks Teacakes, Irn Bru and Tennent's Lager!



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## Accessibility Matters: Supporting Inclusive Social Media in Academic Libraries

*Tyne Stanley*  
*The Open University, UK*

The Open University (OU)'s mission is to be open to people, places, methods, and ideas, and this means that a commitment to equality is embedded in all that we do, including our social media activity. People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities study with us. In fact, we are the largest provider of higher education for people with disabilities: 30,791 students declaring a disability studied with us in 2019/20. Accessibility and inclusivity are at the forefront of the OU's mission to be open to all, and so we've worked hard to make sure the content we put out on the OU Library's social media channels can be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Back in October 2020, my team received an email from a colleague directing us to a blog post about an upcoming social media 'tweetposium'. Now, my background is in social media marketing, but even I had never heard of a tweetposium before. So, feeling intrigued, we perused the blog post and found the criteria of showcasing how you've used social media to build community, care and compassion as very fitting for the OU Library.

Our submission for the tweetposium consisted of four short videos showcasing various tweets we had sent out over the past couple of years that we felt best represented our content's ability to foster community, care and compassion amongst our followers. These included:

- **Accessibility & Support for Students with Disabilities:** our promotion of awareness days, such as International Day of Sign languages and Dyslexia Awareness Week, by sharing informational videos and links to online support, as well as creating videos with OU Library staff to showcase the support they provide.



- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:** our celebration of diversity and the strengths that it brings. For instance, we celebrated Black History Month by showcasing poetry written by BAME poets and observed Pride Month with posts highlighting LGBTQIA educators and activists. For both campaigns, we created original artwork to accompany the posts and linked through to free resources so our followers could learn more.



- **Mental Health & Wellbeing:** sharing mental health support information and resources from the OU and beyond to help promote the wellbeing of our community. Campaigns are run during mental health awareness days and throughout the year providing students with tips to help them look after their mental wellbeing.



- **OU Digital Archive:** how we love to share our university's unique history, by showcasing the Digital Archive through throwback tweets that showcase old study materials and other items relating to the history of the university.



The tweets that featured these videos got a great response and we were delighted with the feedback we got from them. Some examples included:

*“Brilliant first session to kick off what will be an amazing day.”*

*“Brilliant outline of the great work that @OU\_Library do to support our students and the wellbeing of our diverse community at #SocMedHE20.”*

*“Thank you @OU\_Library for sharing resources related to sign language and dyslexia.”*

*“More brilliant resources shared by the @OU\_Library on helping students to manage their mental health during a very challenging year!”*

*“Wow! I had no idea the OU had been active for so long!! That’s amazing.”*

*“It is interesting to see how some institutions are very active in social media to share their #equality and #diversity practices #SocMedHE20”*

The videos are now featured in a playlist on [the OU Library YouTube channel](#) so that they can be viewed by anyone at any time. It was wonderful (and extremely useful) to also have the opportunity to see how other higher education institutions are using their social media channels to communicate with their community.

Our involvement in the tweetposium got us thinking – what else can we do to make sure that our social media continually promotes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)? And how can we help others to do the same? When you go to Google and type ‘inclusive accessible social media’, it returns with ‘about 364,000,000 results’... where on earth do you start?! It took me several days of reading multiple web pages to really get to grips with best practices for using social media in an inclusive and accessible way. Within the OU Library, we have several colleagues that volunteer to create content for our social media account outside of their usual roles. We thought it would be useful to collect and condense the results of my research to create a central document that contains best practice information for creating inclusive and accessible social media, but with academic accounts in mind. The document could then be shared amongst our colleagues, other academic libraries, and beyond, to help others who also want to allow their content to be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

I began by collating the key information that I’d found during my research into a document and organised the information into easy to digest sections: Promoting Diversity and Inclusion; Making Text Accessible; Making Images Accessible; Making Videos Accessible; Contrast and Colour. I also included a section for references and links to further reading (the document would have to be hundreds of pages long to include everything in depth – and no one would have time to read that!) I am by no means an expert in digital accessibility, so I wanted to get the document reviewed by people with an expertise in making online content accessible. The OU has an Accessibility and Usability Evaluation team, as well as an EDI team, who very kindly agreed to review the document and comment with their suggestions. I also sought feedback from our central social media team and an external Library Marketing Trainer. The final step was to get a ‘seal of approval’ per se from an external accessibility consultant. Several of our team members, including myself, have taken part in some fantastic digital accessibility webinars provided by UK charity [AbilityNet](#), who house a team of digital accessibility consultants, so they seemed the ideal people to go to. Their input to the guide has been invaluable.

The latest version of the [Inclusive and Accessible Social Media Guide](#) can be accessed via Open Research Online (ORO) – the Open Access repository of research outputs from The Open University's research community. The service is publicly accessible and can be browsed and searched freely. We are however currently in the process of finding a more permanent home for the guide where we can feature the different versions as it gets updated to reflect changing practices. We'll keep everyone posted about this via the [news section of the OU Library website](#).

We hope that the document will prove to be a valuable resource for others to use in promoting online accessibility and inclusivity. No one is going to be perfect when it comes to being inclusive online but making an effort to make social content more accessible ensures that everyone can enjoy it. The more people that create inclusive content, the more likely it will be for accessibility best practices to become the norm.

## **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.



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## **From tweeting to tweetposium. So what? A reflection.**

*Kiu Sum*  
*University of Westminster, UK*

### **Abstract**

In this reflection, a learner shares their experience of engaging with other like-minded individuals in the online higher education community, @SocMedHE. Furthermore, how engaging the community has enabled their development from observing from a distance to active participation (e.g., #SocMedHE20 tweetposium) and subsequently using that knowledge and experience for other online activities.

### **Keywords**

Social media, community, network, research, PhD

## **From tweeting to tweetposium. So what? A reflection.**

If you ask me to participate in a tweetposium before the pandemic, I would have looked at you blankly. Not just because the word “tweetposium” does not roll easily off your tongue, but I never knew that a symposium could be adapted for inclusivity and accessibility.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of opportunities to build a community and for everyone who might feel isolated during an unprecedented time to come together for care and compassion, despite miles apart. For others, it was during this period where new connections were made, finding other like-minded individuals to develop similar or new interests, creating a new network, expanding our connections far and wide-reaching the unexpected places. For me, it was reflecting my time as a learner as I navigate across a wobbly bridge with a glass floor from a skyscraper height looking across the city. It is incredible how a community like @SocMedHE has provided many insights into my experience in higher education, and more so, during what seems like an isolated journey initially.

In-person classes, symposiums, and conferences were the norm before the pandemic. The excitement of travelling and visiting new places, spending time understanding the local traditions (including the food cuisines) before arriving at the actual venue were a few notable perks. However, the pandemic offered a quicker and cheaper travelling alternative via a few clicks on the computer from the comfort at home. Still, the excitement has somewhat differed. The opportunity to sightsee and engage with other delegates has limited the chance to have those random and personal conversations, with the limited opportunity to engage with the local culture and settings. Nevertheless, technology has enabled endless ‘online travelling’ and participating in activities across the globe that you never thought of doing before the pandemic.

From a mere stumble on following staff members from the educational sectors such as educators, learning developers and technologists, librarians, academics, and other researchers via social media has opened a new door of insights into the diversity of roles and activities in the sector. I never knew about the @SocMedHE community until my discovery a few years ago when other individuals I follow were in online dialogues sharing their work using social media with students. A short trip up to the Midlands in the UK and I discovered a somewhat unique conference format (unlike a typical academic research conference). Of course, I previously sat in workshops where you are taught to be prepared to have an elevator pitch ready for those awkward situations when I do not know anyone at a conference. However, all that training went out of the window as I arrived at my first ever @SocMedHE conference. I experienced the unexpected. I was unsure what I should be feeling while being in the same room as the experts (or, should I say, influencers) in the higher education sector. It was such a weird feeling, which felt like you were at a festival rather than a conference. For example, all the session incorporated creativity and fun aspects whilst enhancing and emphasising the meaning behind learning and teaching in education. From the individualisation and personalisation (for example, the first task at the conference was to create and design your name badge) to the community who shows care and compassion made me felt like I have been part of this energetic community for a long time, despite stood there by the registration desk. It is a community where you could engage in conversations and not judged by random and silly questions. It is a community where there are justifiable reasons to have fun in nearly, if not all, sessions (where is part of the programme), and simultaneously learning the latest research using social media in higher education. Ultimately, it was enriching to meet and be in the same room as the experts behind those online conversations. Thus, the opportunity to participate in those forward-thinking and provocative discussions on how we could collaborate on cross-institutional projects with the same vision, enhance learning and teaching using social media from our lenses.

The experience gained from @SocMedHE has shown how social media and technology can connect individuals no matter where they are and be in a community where everyone has a shared interest, especially during a year where everyone has been working remotely. When the opportunity arose to present at a tweetposium, I was intrigued by this innovative approach, with the curiosity to see how it work. With more remote working since the pandemic, I found myself, like everyone else, engulfed in online webinars, symposiums, conferences, etc., where attendance is easier than before. However, I miss the local traditions and the sightseeing and meeting people in person for those weird and random conversations during this pandemic. Nevertheless, the concept of a tweetposium was simple. Scheduled tweets curated by the presenters were tweeted out in the time slots by the host organiser's Twitter account, in this case, from @SocMedHE. Moreover, during the "presentation" slot, participants and the presenter could engage in real-time conversations through tweeting comments and sharing resources to other information. It was somewhat an interesting experience. There were no direct audio or video engagement with participants, but rather all done via 240 characters composed in a series of tweets (courtesy of Sue Beckingham for collating the tweets). With the opportunity to share my perception on the #SocMedHE20 conference's topic on community, care, and compassion, I shared how technology provides an innovative approach to connect with others, building a community and finding your sense of belonging. Furthermore, how social media has facilitated my experience of a transparent learning approach, breaking barriers down and working collaboratively to enhance our digital capabilities for the wider higher education community.

Taking this experience of #SocMedHE20 tweetposium, I adapted this idea to a Twitter Takeover I led in a weeklong Graduate School Festival (#UoWGradFest2021) in May 2021. The overall aim of the festival was to showcase the research carried out by the doctoral students at the University of Westminster through a series of workshops, panel discussions, screenings, competitions, exhibitions, keynote talks, podcast. The concept of the Twitter Takeover (#PhDShowcase) was to showcase the doctoral students from across the different disciplines across the university, taking a glimpse into their research, the importance and impact of it, and their favourite moments so far at university. In total, 41 PhD students participated following a mass invitation on the weekly graduate school newsletter, of which they answered three questions based on the above. Working with the festival organising team, we scheduled over 120 tweets out to spread across the week. Though it seemed like an impossible task with a large number of tweets, it was a good opportunity for students who may not be as 'social media savvy' to participate, communicating their research and university experience out to the wider community. For me, this Twitter Takeover activity highlighted the diversity of our research, bringing our PhD community together to have those conversations we normally have when on campus during the festival. But ultimately, reconnecting ourselves back into the community we have at our institutions and encouraging and supporting one another in our PhD journey.

The pandemic has certainly encouraged us to view our learning and teaching community like no other than before. Over time, social media is becoming a prominent tool not just for social interactions and communications but instead emerging as an educational tool for knowledge exchange and extending our network and collaborations to unexpected areas. Attending meetings, symposiums, and conferences via traditional format is no longer the only option, but rather utilising social media to stay connected and partake in discussions with others based in other locations. Though virtual attendance can never replace in-person experience, remote engagement presents the opportunity to develop our community, care, and compassion in similar and meaningful ways.

## **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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## Reflections on #SocMedHE20

*Nina Walker*  
*University of Hertfordshire, UK*

### Reflections on #SocMedHE20

A long time ago, back when we were able to enjoy conferences face to face, I attended a workshop on the use of Snapchat to enhance engagement with students. Listening to Suzanne Faulkner (@SFaulknerPandO) talk about using social media to effectively engage students really resonated with me. I am the Student Experience Lead in my department however also teach on the Master of Pharmacy programme and am responsible for the alumni provision for our graduates. I had run a graduate platform for networking and support using Project Management software for a few years but had had issues with engagement and I had been toying with the idea of using social media as it seemed to offer a better engagement aspect. So, soon after I established my graduate platform on Instagram and set about adding content.

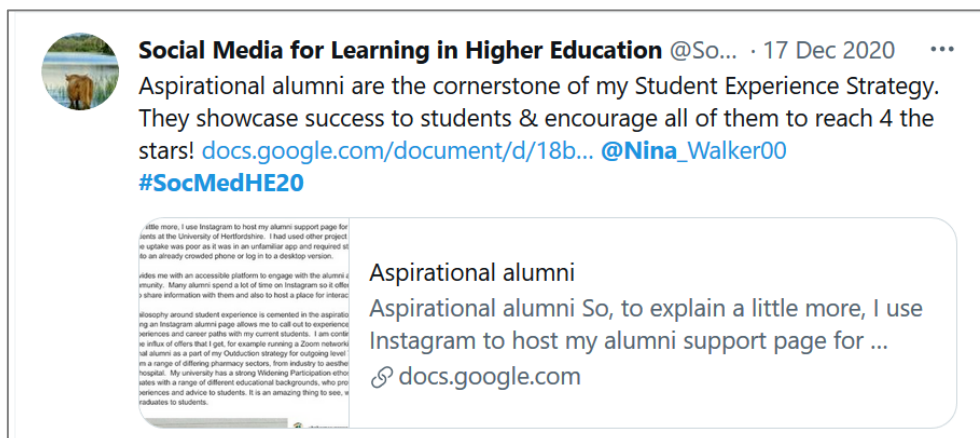
I would never consider myself a social media whizz, I am learning all the time but am so pleased that I took the step to use Instagram as it has really increased engagement and I wanted to share this with others.

With a little encouragement I submitted an application for the Tweetposium for #SocMedHE20 which I was delighted to hear was accepted.

Preparing for it was a little different from other conferences I had presented at. I had to squish all I wanted to say into 240 characters – how was I going to do it.... and fit in the hashtags.... and my handle? Well with a little help from the organisers and a bit of creative thinking, I created my tweets and where relevant linked to a Googledoc that then went on to explain a little more about each of my tweets. This was a perfect way to get the core elements of what I wanted to say into the tweet and then expand a bit more in the Googledoc, plus all my tweets were submitted ahead of the Tweetposium date and auto-released for me, letting me get on with responding to comments and interacting with others on the day:







You didn't have to use Googledocs, you could link to a pre-prepared video or a presentation or article or even directly link to a TikTok video or platforms such as GatherTown that would showcase your practice. Being able to link to a range of different sources gave a brilliant flexibility for the submission, letting you share practice in the most authentic way for you. Also being on Twitter meant that I could go back to tweets that interested me after conference closed and still have access to all the materials.

The conference was an amazing and rewarding way to share practice with others on a range of different topics. Not only was it fun, but it brought such an accessible and digestible way to learn from others that I would absolutely love to be involved in it again. Being held on Twitter gave me the opportunity to share my work with an international audience and also to dip in and out of other people's presentations, with the added benefit of being able to message people or comment directly if their work took my interest. Never have I had that level of immediate interaction at a conference and it only goes to strengthen the community feel that the Tweetposium had. That and the extra joy that Hamish the Coo brought to the day..... Thank you #SocMedHE20 for having me, I will be back!



## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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## **Identity on Social Media.**

*Sarah Honeychurch*  
*The University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK*

### **Abstract**

In this short piece I talk about identity on social media and compare it to a performance. I highlight the importance of an audience for online learners and emphasise that the connections that we forge in our online interactions are as real as the ones that we make in our off-line lives. I end by thanking my online communities for all of the support they continue to give me.

### **Keywords**

Identity, performance, community, audience, open.

## Identity on Social Media.

How did you develop your online identity? Did you make any conscious decisions about what sorts of things you would and would not say, or did you just jump in with both feet and make it up as you went along? How did you decide what to write in your Twitter profile, or choose your Twitter avatar? When we consider questions like this, it seems plausible to suggest that an online identity is to some extent constructed, in the sense that we can decide who we want to be on social media. Sometimes people take this to mean that our online interactions are only virtual and not real, so we do not need to take them seriously. I always feel the need to push back at this line of thought because I know that my online friendships are as real as any of my relationships.

A paper that got me thinking about online identity is Erika Pearson's *All the World Wide Web's a stage: The performance of identity in online social networks*. Pearson begins with Goffman's theatrical metaphor of 'identity-as-performance' – which is the theory that we adapt our personalities according to the social situations that we find ourselves in, that our online personas are "deliberately constructed performances". As Pearson says, the thought that we can choose to some extent how we portray ourselves, either on or offline, is not a radical idea. For example, we can decide before we set up our profiles the sorts of things we will and won't share, and then present ourselves online as we would like others to see us. We can, if we like, hide parts of our lives (for example, not sharing pics of our family on Twitter, and not engaging in discussions about religion and politics) and emphasise others.

However, Pearson suggests that we should be careful in how we apply Goffman's metaphor to social media. As she points out, in a theatre there are front and backstage areas with physical separation between them, and much of the literature about identity-as-performance focusses on the on-stage aspect of the metaphor. On social media, the separation between public and private, between visible and invisible, is not as clear cut. This means that understanding identity as being a performance might seem plausible when we think about social media as being a platform like a stage that we walk on an off as we want, but there is a difference between being actors on a stage and identities on social media. On social media the lines between front and backstage are blurred - our social media personas are not as easy to pick up and put down as characters in a play – we often bring our 'backstage' selves into our online performances.

And this can make us vulnerable - for those of us who play in open, online communities, our practice is to share our 'makes' publicly when they are rough, unfinished, tentative – and doing this can be unsettling, even terrifying to do. I might look self-assured and confident as I share my doodles on Twitter, but I am still vulnerable, and I care deeply about what others think about them. Likewise, those who participate in tweet chats like #LTHEChat or contribute to a Tweetposium like #SocMedHE20 are sharing personal opinions in an open space without knowing who might see them.

Knowing that there is a potential audience can be a double-edged sword – on the one hand, knowing that there is someone watching motivates me to post; on the other hand, not knowing exactly who might see it can stop me from sharing because I worry about my 'professional' image. I might forget that they are there in the heat of the moment, when I get caught up in a conversation or a game, but in some sense the knowledge that an audience (might) be there keeps me accountable because I care how others view me, and I hope they also care about me.



This is where hashtag communities are so important. To paraphrase the film *Alien* sometimes it can seem that ‘on the internet no-one can hear you scream’ and that you are tweeting into a void. When I see something that interests me, I share it to one of my communities by using an appropriate hashtag because I know that others are likely to see it then. When someone ‘likes’ a post, or responds to me, it gives me a boost. The more I share, the more my confidence grows. I feel connected to others in my network. I care, you care, we all care. This is how we build a community.

Two of the communities that are most important to me are #CLMOOC and #DS106, creative communities with a common practice of remix. Come and join us, if you like.

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