

106: How I Leverage My Podcast at Academic Conferences

This transcript is not totally edited.

Dr. Dan Dissinger

[00:00:00] On today's episode of writing remix. I'm talking all about using your podcast, your advantage at your conferences. Hey everyone, Dan here from the writing remix. And today I'm talking about, like I said, Using your podcast to your advantage at your academic conferences.

If you see me, if this is posted actually as a video I have my notes on my computer, so sometimes I might be looking away from the camera, but I'm paying attention. So conferences and podcasts. First, I want to talk a little bit about how I changed my perspective and approach to conferences. When I started doing conferences as a younger academic, as a green academic, it was all about going to the conference, going to read a paper, filling in those lines of my CV and really about proving myself to the academic field, whether that was literature or Kerouac studies [00:01:00] or composition and rhetoric.

I was always felt like I was going there to prove that I belong, to prove that I had something to say and that I was worth listening to. And it definitely gave me a lot of anxiety. It definitely was something I had to work on and being myself. This was very difficult because the most of the time was reading a paper or was very nervous.

So it was a lot of anxiety, sometimes defensiveness, sometimes not being vulnerable and really just not really being there, right? Not. truly embodying the moment of my presentation. It was almost like an outer body experience. And then it was just like, I was done and then nothing else. So that happened for quite a bit.

And then around, I think around 2018, 2019. I started to move away from that a lot more and doing more roundtable [00:02:00] conversations, doing more workshops, and definitely being more collaborative. I, I remember working with a lot of people that I went to St. John's with Dr. Megan Nolan. Dr. Scott Morgan we would go to conferences and collaborate on workshops and create real interactive experiences.

And I started to get into my own and being like, Oh, you know what? It doesn't have to be about reading a paper. I can truly just be myself. I know it, it took me a long time to figure that out. But once that started happening, I felt more comfortable. I felt like I can actually add something here, not so much add, but

provide value that's participatory where like the people that came to our presentation to our workshop actually would walk away with something right now around 2019, 2020 of course, I want to start a podcast.

I've been obsessed with them for so long and then remix [00:03:00] with Katie McNey who was the host of this podcast with me. And then the pandemic hit and we continued the podcast and the rest of the history with writing remix. But the podcast changes something for me and what the podcast changed for me was networking.

more collaboration and more me learning way more from the people coming on and it acting like my classroom, right? So almost like I would be able to take a step back as the academic and listen, learn, and learn. And even interact and participate in the conference and in the presentation, right? Or in the podcast, right?

So at that time I have the writing remix. I had the nostalgia test podcast, which I do with my friend Manny Coelho. He lives in New York and we do a pop culture comedy podcast, but we've also done things with scholars from all over the world, professionals like movie [00:04:00] directors, the director of the Orange Years, and this is Guar.

We had on a the person who created the Q Bert arcade game, Warren Davis. We've had actors on, the stars of the movie Snack Shack. We've had Like I said, international scholars, pop pop music singers, and all sorts of people. And it started to be, and also one of my favorite episodes, the creator of Tickle Me Elmo Matt Nuccio, amazing episodes.

So you can go check that out as well. Then. I helped co create the humanities podcast network. Something that like is going throughout everything is like the networking, right? The collaboration, the, how can we create for audience, right? So the podcast really is audience centered, not not creator centered.

Previous to 2018, everything, a lot of the things I was doing at conferences was about me, was like, [00:05:00] I'm the center of this. It's very, in a way, selfish, and I almost was like, what am I doing? I'm, it doesn't feel natural. The podcast really pushed me into thinking more about my audience, and then all of a sudden, as I'm doing that, my conference presentations and my conference participations started to change.

The other thing about podcasting is It archives everything all 100 right now in five episodes, this being maybe 106 or 107, depending on how it comes out of

writing remix all at the time of recording this episode, 123 episodes of The Nostalgia Test are all archived for future listeners, right? Any conference presentation that you do most of the time, unless the conference is recording them, unless you ask for it to be recorded, unless it is part of your work, it is not archived.

There's [00:06:00] nothing there telling you that you were there except for your name in the in the booklet. and your line on your CV. And maybe if you save your presentation and you use it at a later date, maybe you turn it into a paper or something like that. But in essence, it doesn't go much further than the conference day, right?

With a podcast, this episode will be on until it gets taken down by me or something happens to the internet or whatever, right? But hopefully nothing happens and this will outlive me. So then after I'm gone, this episode still exists, right? That's the idea. So the podcast reach is much further and the archival aspect of the podcast is so important, right?

So as I'm thinking about all these things, I'm like, how can I bring podcasting into my conference? Participation, right? Because as the world started to reopen after the pandemic after people were [00:07:00] like, okay, we can have conferences in person again. I'm like what can I do now? I'm doing this amazing podcast thing.

How can I use this? How can I use the skills that I've learned as a podcaster and bring him to these conferences? So I have two approaches that I think really worked for me and I'm going to share them both with you. And then, in the show notes, you'll see the links to the episodes that also I'll be discussing in these two approaches, right?

The first approach in 2023, I went to the Southwest Popular American Culture Association Conference and 4Cs, Conference on College Composition and Communication. I've been to both of these conferences before. I presented at both of these conferences, I've done workshops, I've done roundtables, I've done paper presentations, I've done everything that I could think of in terms of going to these conferences, right?

So in 2023, I'm like, what can I do [00:08:00] to push myself out of my comfort zone as a scholar? So what I ended up doing was challenging myself to, at each conference, to interview conference participants. It was for me personally, one of the hardest things I had to do most of the time. When I go to conferences, I do my conference presentation.

If my colleagues are there from USC, like at four C's, we bring a bunch of people there. It's a strong showing of USC writing professors, shout out USC writing professors in the writing program. Some of the best colleagues I've ever had, some of the smartest, most dynamic colleagues I've had. Yeah. We go there, we might hang out, but a lot of times I'm, despite the, me being a podcaster, I could be very shy.

So sometimes I'll do my presentation. I'll go back to my hotel room, hang out and then leave. But instead I wanted to go, okay, let me interview some people. So at Four Seas, I interviewed [00:09:00] several people at the digital poster presentation. Each digital poster presentation in 2023 was amazing. The three or four presentations that I did get to talk to the participants of.

So awesome, you should, hear their presentations on the episode episode 96 of the Writing Remix. And I got to interview and talk to Chair of social justice at the convention committee, Professor Antonio Byrd, who was another amazing human being to get the chance to talk to.

Shout out Antonio Byrd. And that was a really great conversation because it got, it allowed me to get on the inside of 4Cs and like how things are working behind the scenes. A lot of the times we go to these conferences and we only see the outside. We see what we go there to do.

But the inner workings and how the conference happens or [00:10:00] the inner workings of special events or where they want to go in the future, we don't sometimes get to hear about that. I just took it upon myself to ask each person if they would like to talk for a few minutes. I had my computer. I had my microphones.

And actually each and every everyone I asked was way open to talking they were Actually excited to have a time to talk about what they do What their poster presentation was even further than that, right? Antonio Byrd wanted it was so You happy to talk about what types of things are coming in terms of 4Cs.

And so like I was really surprised and not surprised at the same time to hear all of the excitement from everyone that I interviewed. After I edited that presentation, that episode and put it out, it actually became one of the more popular episodes at Writing Remix. And it really showed me that people want [00:11:00] to hear.

about the conference presentations, right? Especially if you can't go to these conferences or you didn't, or you missed the four C's conference. If you see that there's a podcast episode about four C's, you might click on that and listen to that, right? After the success of that one, I was like, let me do this again.

So if are interested in listening to the next one as Southwest popular culture, it was episode 98. This was really fun because this one, first of all, Southwest popular American culture conference is a niche conference, right? It is a. fun conference that happens in New Mexico. And a lot of the presentations go from like zombies to horror movies, to music to my conference was on literature and American literature and counterculture.

So I did something on, on Kerouac. One other guy did something on the beats. And then this other participant who is actually [00:12:00] featured in the episode 98, talked all about. The symbol Like almost like the American symbol of those like plastic pink flamingos. It was the greatest presentation.

She talks more about it in my small interview with her, but this conference is so fun. It's the nerdiest nerd conference that I've ever been to. And so when I got to talk to certain people there, it was, It allowed me to go deeper into it. I even got to talk to an amazing artist who does all these Roswell posters and things like that.

And it was just so much fun. And something I started to realize is again, like I'm nervous for no reason to open up and ask people if they want to be interviewed, they do. They want to talk, they're there to share. And something that I can provide as a podcaster is platform. Even though like we're at this conference, the conference platform only goes so far.

And if I can provide further platform and [00:13:00] further reach then I could then why not take it upon myself to highlight and to talk to people and to allow, everyone to hear what goes on at these conferences, right? Sometimes it's behind closed doors.

We don't know what's going on. You have to pay dues. You have to do things to get in. So it's I could give them an inside look. at the conference without them having to pay any money to actually participate or go there, right? It's almost like a supplemental material for the conference as well, right?

It's just I was able to go to these conference presentations, but here's this podcast episode that allows me to go deeper, right? This one did really well.

People really liked this episode and I was very proud of it. It was very fun. And this is the other thing as a podcaster.

And as a scholar, it gives you a second part to your presentation. So like you go, you do your presentation and like you get, you put that on your CV, whatever. And then you have this second thing that you've done. So this part, [00:14:00] like as a podcaster, allows you to kind of network collaborate maybe even get involved.

guests for your future episodes. There are a lot of people that I'm just like, Oh man, I really want to have them on for a longer conversation. And when you ask people, they're like, yeah, that would be great. People want to talk, right? They want to, we're academics. We want to share our ideas, right? It's something that we do.

Now, the second thing I would say, the second approach was, I feel like something that I definitely want to keep doing, right? In 2024, right now, this year in the early parts of the year, I went back to Southwest Popular American Culture Conference. And this time, I collaborated with two USC writing program. Jen Sopchokchai Bankard and P. T. McNiff, who are part of the Long Take Review podcast, which Jen started as a substack and now as a podcast. It's an amazing [00:15:00] pop culture podcast where They look at Star Wars, Marvel, all sorts of different, they go through the Oscars.

They do a lot of things about movies and she writes amazing pieces on the substack and gives a long analytical take of each episode. It's quite an undertaking.

All respect to Jen and her work on the Long Take Review. It's so fun. I've had them on a few times on the Nostalgia Test and we had such a great time. But this, I would say, what we ended up doing was going, okay, we're popular culture conference, we're popular culture podcasters, right?

With the Nostalgia Test and the Long Take. What is it like to live between two worlds, right? How do we want to do this? Something I've learned about small conferences that they want to do interesting creative things. So if you reach out and ask them, Hey, I have this idea for my presentation. What do you think at Southwest popular culture?

They're like, we're down. We'll figure it out. [00:16:00] So what we ended up doing was we recorded. our presentation as a live podcast episode, right? So the presentation itself was billed as a live podcast episode. And so when we did our

presentation, yeah, we had our slides and stuff like that, but we treated it much more like we were doing an episode of a podcast together, recorded it live.

And then we both released these episodes on our respective, podcasts, which writing remix, nostalgia tests, and the long take, I'll put all the links down there. You can get the links to listen to them, to the episode. And then we took questions and answers from the audience.

It was a very interactive episode. It was really great. It was like doing a live episode. This is something I want to do definitely in future and future conferences and the reason is because it allowed me now to take this [00:17:00] presentation, archive the presentation. and put the presentation out for people to then consume and listen to so that it doesn't just die at the conference.

This presentation was really great and what I want to do is I want to share that. I don't want as those doors closed in the conference room that like no one outside That room ever gets to hear what we did. I want everyone to be able to hear what I did. I want everyone to be able to gain something from what this presentation provided and I feel like.

With just a little bit of techno like tech Savviness, right? Don't be afraid to ask about for tech help with just a little tech savviness and a little bit of equipment that I'll put even In the show notes the kind of microphones that I use and how I just basically recorded this on my computer with the microphones and we just plug them in a specific way.[00:18:00]

And it's very simple. And the tech people helped us all do this, that I, now I'm able to take this, archive it and have it forever. And everyone else gets, and everyone gets to listen to it. It's not something that just, again, dies at the conference at the same time, too. What was great is because this is the podcast specific episode, a podcast specific presentation, I'm sorry.

I know I'm like messing up all my words, but again, this is just how I do this. This is how I am. And this is, raw, just solo episode. There were other people there that were interested in podcasting. So podcasters came and we were the, actually, we were the only podcast centric presentation at this conference.

So if you're a podcaster out there, you should be doing more podcast centric presentations. Yeah. At these conferences, even though podcasting has been around for quite a bit right now, it's still very [00:19:00] new in the scholastic world. Okay, not a lot of people are talking about it, back in 2020, 2021, when

the humanities podcast network started, we were the only and the first podcast specific presentation at MLA.

that year, okay? So there's not a lot of work going around. There's not a lot of podcasters going to conferences and podcasting, right? Now, there are a lot of us out there, academic podcasters and scholastic podcasters in the humanities and the sciences and all over, right? Yet, when we go to conferences, it seems though we might want to talk about podcasting we do that thing where we're just like, let me do the conference thing, right?

There might be a paper or a round table or some sort of like slides or something like that. But we have this amazing medium. We're doing something on a daily basis. Why not bring it to the conference? Bring the podcast to the conference, record the presentation [00:20:00] as a podcast, show people that it doesn't just have to be this side project.

It can be part of the Scholastic conversation way more, in a way more mainstream way, right? This isn't just fringe technology. This isn't just a fringe thing, right? Podcasting is a way to reach a wider audience of people, and so why not use it at the conference? So this is something that I feel like, if you have a podcast and you're going to go to conferences this year or between 2024 and 2025 in this next academic year or whatever, Challenge yourself to interview people at the conference and post those interviews as an episode, or record your presentation and post the presentation as a live episode.

Okay? It is, it was really rewarding. Now, I also, because I met an amazing podcaster there, shout out to Dr. J. L. Adolph, an amazing [00:21:00] podcaster. We had him on the Nostalgia Test podcast. He talked all about higher learning the John Singleton movie. What a great conversation.

It's in the show notes, episode 119, and you could check out some of his courses at the DadCypherEdutainment. com That's DadCypherEdutainment. com. It's going to be in the show notes. He came on, has schooled me and Manny on so many of the things going on in higher learning, but also had some amazing questions for our presentation when we did it at Southwest Popular Culture.

So networking, collaboration, and also just getting people out of that normal conference going experience, right? My final thoughts of this one, get the most out of your conference presentations, okay? You put a lot of work into it. I know that we all do, okay, we stress [00:22:00] about it, we write these things, we create proposals, we send them out, we pay to go to the conference, we pay

for flights, we pay for food, we pay for hotels, we pay fees or MLA, and then we pay the registration fees.

And then after all that money is spent, you do a presentation. Maybe one person, maybe sometimes, which this has happened to me, one person shows up, no people show up, maybe it's a room full of people. It's random. If you can record your work and then post it afterwards, and it doesn't matter how many people came to your conference, okay?

It doesn't matter because you now have the work to post and maybe hundreds of people will listen to it, maybe thousands. I don't know what your reach is, okay? Okay. Record your conference presentations, get the most out of your [00:23:00] work. Don't let, a little technological issue be the hurdle to this.

Okay? You're paying all that money. Get the most out of it. Two, networking. It's a great way to network. Interviewing people, listening to what they're saying. Maybe someone is doing something that you're like, Oh my God, it would be great to collaborate with them on an episode, or on another presentation, or another project.

People want to talk. People want to be heard at the same time. And this is the other thing, it's not just speaking with, to them, it's listening. People are like, oh, you care what I want to hear. You care what I'm interested in. And as a podcaster, that's what I feel like my job is to learn. So I'm just walking around like creating my own conference, my own like classroom, right?

And people want to teach and it is just really interesting. Archiving a podcast is archival. Okay? Conference presentations, unless you archive them in some way, [00:24:00] they just die with the conference. Okay? Archive your work. You work really hard. Get the most out of it. let it be, let it last a little longer.

Okay. Then you can also use these episodes as proof of your scholarship think of the reach of a podcast versus a presentation and an article, right? Someone at the Southwest popular culture conference in 2023 during, after my Kerouac presentation said, you should be recording these.

Record them as video, record them somehow, post them to YouTube, or post them, right? And I know there's a lot, going on now too with AI and posting things and everything AI can be, very, we don't know what the future is and all that, right? So actually having proof of your work or even in terms of creating things as much as you can, it's got, you have to start, you might have to start thinking about content creation and what that means in the scholastic space.

Okay. [00:25:00] And you don't need a lot of expensive equipment to do this. Okay. Despite what people say, does not have to be expensive at all. You can literally get microphones for not that much money. You could put your podcast on sub stack pretty much for free. Okay. And then all of a sudden you have a podcast, you have a blog, you have a website, you have reach.

Okay. So you really got to think I'm putting all this work into this presentation. What can I do with it? How much more can I get out of this presentation? Don't be afraid to ask for tech help. The tech people at these conferences are there to help. That's their job. Don't be afraid to email people prior and email the conference and ask for interesting things.

Like sometimes, I've had an idea of going to the conference and setting up a podcast booth and they were like, yeah, we're down with that at Southwest popular culture, it was a little too much work. And when I thought about it, so I didn't end up doing it, but people are down to do interesting [00:26:00] things because these things are always the same.

Now, the last thing I would say is this,

it sounds like such a teacher thing to say, but have fun. Have fun at these conferences. Have fun on your presentation. They don't have to be that serious. A lot of times when I was first doing this, I was just taking it so seriously. And then I was able to, and then I was, my mentor, dr.

Granville Ganter in St. John's. Shout out Dr. Ganter. He invited me to the Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus. at, actually at Southwest popular culture the first time I went. And I got to see scholarship in A whole other way. Everyone was so interested. Everyone was so curious and everyone was there to learn and it was so much fun and no one was taking it that seriously, but they got so much out [00:27:00] of it and I was blown away by that.

And so once I started seeing that this It's something that I love. Have fun with it. I want to have fun podcasting. And when I talk to people, I have fun. When I interact with people, I have fun. When I know that my presentation is not just a presentation, but when we did this in 2024, that this was a live episode, it was so much fun.

We got to be ourselves, talk to each other, talk to the audience, do. The thing that we do that we choose to do which is podcasting and do that at the conference. So make it fun

so I hope everyone got something out of that. I am going to, put some links into some of the, again, to the episodes, the podcast that I've mentioned, and also the equipment I'm using, just to show you it's not that expensive. And also think about it This is a, this is an exciting medium. And there's a lot of people out [00:28:00] there that want to help.

Humanities Podcast Network, we're out there. We have an amazing book that you could download about even teaching podcasts in the classroom. So go to our website, which will be in the show notes and come to the symposium, which it's looking like we're having a symposium this year in November. And it's free.

You can come. It's free. Go to some of the presentations, network with other podcasters and check out the long take review. And check out Writing Remix, which you're already listening to in the other episodes. And check out the Nostalgia Test Podcast. Get excited. What is your niche? What is the thing that you love to talk about?

What is the thing that you can merge with your scholarship? And be yourself. I hope you enjoyed this episode. We're going to be doing a lot more solo episodes this semester. And just from here on out. And get the most out of your conferences, everyone. Have a great day. See you at the next [00:29:00] Writing Remix episode.