Social Media Narrative:
Issues in Contemporary Practice
hosted by The Rutgers Camden Digital Studies Center and Judy Malloy
and the Rutgers Camden DSC Class in Social Media Narrative:
Lineage and Contemporary Practice
Facebook, November 16 - 21, 2016

Transcript: Alice Wong

Alice Wong
November 18 at 6:35am

Hi everyone! I apologize for joining a few days after the discussion started. Thank you Judy for inviting me to participate. My name is Alice Wong and I founded the Disability Visibility Project, a community partnership with StoryCorps and an online community dedicated to recording, amplifying, and sharing disability stories and culture. I'm also a co-partner in #CripTheVote, a nonpartisan online campaign encourages the political participation of disabled people during the 2016 election. The response was so amazing that we're continuing this work indefinitely. All of #CripTheVote's activities take place on Twitter or Facebook. I gave a recent video presentation about our campaign at a conference a few months ago for a panel about social media & civil rights movements, check it out:

Disability Visibility in Election 2016: The #CripTheVote Campaign
This is a video presentation prepared for the opening panel of the Disability Rights Bar Association West Coast Conference "Intersectionality and Oppression:...
youtube.com
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWn1IMT2a34

Comments

Judy Malloy Hi Alice,
It is so good to have your voice here!
In recent years, I have been happily surprised by the increase of diversity in Universities. A few years ago, I walked into a class at Princeton where I, the *only* WASP in the class, was on crutches. Ten years ago this would seldom if ever occurred. This fall, my class at Rutgers Camden

is happily very diverse -- although you may not know that when they post online. Nevertheless, in academia, people with disabilities remain underrepresented, sometimes even shunned, sometimes purposefully put in situations that either demonstrate their unfitness or challenge their status as disabled (as if anyone would choose to go through life on crutches in order to gain a benefit that is seldom given).

As you point out, and as David Parry points out in Removing the Barriers to Participation for Disabled Scholars -- https://chroniclevitae.com/.../1058-removing-the-barriers... -- a factor is the difficulties in attending conferences. "The core problem here is that conferences involve a set of normative activities that most academics take for granted and feel are mandatory to the enterprise," he observes.

But social media -- for instance the large community of digital studies scholars on Twitter -- is one way of giving creative artists and scholars with disabilities a more equal presence in their field!
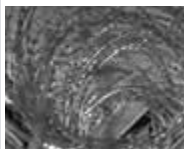
Removing the Barriers to Participation for Disabled Scholars

What you can do to make your academic conference more accessible.

November 19 at 8:47am

Deena Larsen I was just at the Colorado School of Mines, advocating for a homeless student who needs one class to graduate. their diversity chair is in a building on a hill, with no elevator. So I had to crawl up the concrete stairs. She met me half way down, and we spoke on the lawn. It just kind of viscerally showed me that the barriers are still there on campus.
November 19 at 8:26pm

Alice Wong Yes--it's pretty horrible that physical access is still an issue at schools. This on top of social barriers such as ableism and micro aggressions toward disabled people
November 19, 2016 at 9:21pm

Deena Larsen Yeah, I have lots of "funny" stories about being in a wheelchair. Mostly, people assume that if your legs don't work, your brain does not either. I would **LOVE** to see wheelchairs at all schools (kindergarten through universities) where people were invited to be in the chair for one day. Get extra credit in ANY course by staying in the chair (no cheating and no speeding) and writing about it. And of course the administrators should be required to do that!
November 19, 2016 at 11:37pm

Alice Wong Hey Deena, if you want to record your story for the DVP using the StoryCorps app, here's the link with the details 😊 :) https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/.../oral.../

[Oral Histories with the StoryCorps app](#)
disabilityvisibilityproject.com
November 22, 2016 at 3:19am

Alice Wong
November 19 at 4:22am

I'd like to pose a question to my co-panelists and other folks:

With all of its benefits and inherent risks, there are still barriers that people face accessing social media. I'd like to know what the panelists think about inequality & access to social media in relation to their work/area of focus

[Judith Adele](#) Do you mean financial inequality? If so, yes, that's a huge barrier for too many. Access to a computer and an internet connection isn't free, especially for rural poor.
November 19 at 1:04pm

[Alice Wong](#) Judith Adele financial inequality and inequality very broadly such as cultural capital
November 19 at 9:19pm

[Deena Larsen](#) We have become not just the haves and have nots, but the connected and unconnected. This divide greatly troubles me.
Like · Reply · November 19 at 8:47pm

[Deena Larsen](#) But worse, I think is the bubble that social media creates for us. I can not read my fb, twitter, instagram, reddit, digg, youtube, flickr, blogs, etc. etc. etc. So what I get is very narrow--and the bubble just reflects my friends thoughts--not the pulse of what is "actually going on out there...."
November 19 at 8:52pm

[Deena Larsen](#) My ads reflect back what I search on. (I play a game with this--I search on very odd things like purple thornless climbing roses or black current russian tea or toilets for india--and see what comes up in my ads.) So I am very afraid that all we see in social media is a reflection of what we put out there--and we can not break this mirror down.
November 19 at 8:53pm

Alice Wong Agreed, Deena Larsen--it's always in the back of mind as I use social media and the various things I create for it--how can I make it more accessible? How can I bring in more people and make it more inclusive? How can I demystify it for people who don't understand it or are uninterested?

November 19 at 9:20pm

Deena Larsen The problem is actually--how can I make something **Visible** to those who do not even know that it--or the point of view--or the community--exists? We are all becoming more and more isolated. In the early 90s, we thought, wow. cool..... all of the people who love pink poodles can now get together. What we did not know was that the networks would make it so that people who love pink poodles can only see others who love pink poodles. Now, read that sentence and substitute "Trump". "Clinton" "diversity" "white power..." "black lives matter" "police" "stability..." and all of a sudden, we have real world consequences to our mirrors of blindness in social media.

November 19 at 11:32pm

Deena Larsen I also think it is an intellectual divide--people who get complexity and those who want simplicity.... and that is a big focus in my work.

November 19 at 11:36pm

Jim Brown The point Deena has made here and on another thread about the inability to see certain viewpoints is, for me, a central concern. This is often discussed in terms of individual choice, but I think this is much more about an algorithmic choice. Yes, we "choose" who to friend, but we don't choose how our various feeds are manipulated. In this sense, we all access completely different news, opinions, etc. In my own work, I've been interested in how this shift forces us to rethink what we mean by "publics." In print culture, publics are often defined by punctual reading practices (daily newspapers, etc.) and those practices mean that we can consider (at least for the most part) how a group of people respond to the same argument. But this experience is largely gone. We now experience vastly different sets of texts and arguments. Where/what are our publics in this situation?

November 20 at 4:15pm

Jim Brown And of course, the other questions of access are important too. Many times, questions of access default to a question of who has technology. But the bigger issue is who "has" the skills. The skills are linked to the gadgets/objects, but providing access to a laptop does not fix the problem. We need more complex ways of thinking about the digital divide...but, of course, this is something folks have been arguing for awhile.

November 20 at 4:17pm

Deena Larsen Jim Brown--I agree--and I think this gets at something fundamental: how to think. When you are confronted with a false image on your social media feed (or even a joke based on a falsehood) what do you do? how do you react? How do you research it?

http://www.npr.org/.../mark-zuckerberg-addresses-fake...

Mark Zuckerberg Addresses Fake News On Facebook

Some have criticized Facebook for being a platform that allowed fake news to spread. Following the criticism, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg released plans to combat fake news on the site.
npr.org

November 20 at 5:33pm

Deena Larsen do people even know about argument forms, rhetoric, etc.? How do you react to the deluge of information/false information?

November 20 at 5:34pm

Bree Gibbs Alice Wong. I love that you focus on this kind of work. I was wondering what has inspired you to focus on this kind of work?

November 21 at 12:27pm

Chindu Sreedharan Alice, I feel SM is also an equaliser. As things have evolved, are evolving, the barriers of entry and participation are getting lower. For instance, you don't need the kind of savviness you needed just two years ago to create native stuff, let alone consume SM content. That is not to say there is no inequality, but that the inequality might be more subtle than lack of access.

November 22 at 2:25am

Alice Wong Things are constantly improving for sure--it's exciting to see so many tools that people have at their disposal for creating art and media. I still try not to get too caught up in it and extol its virtues when there are many who still struggle for the basics

November 22 at 3:18am

Judy Malloy Alice Wong On Thanksgiving Day I visited the Disability Visibility Project's Facebook page and liked what you said:

"It's a place for all of us and I'm thankful everyday to be able to share this space with you."

This afternoon, I returned to the Disability Visibility Project's page and spent longer than I had intended reading a linked-to Washington Post story that

focused on Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton's daughter, Kathleen -- her supportive home life to which she herself contributes and how she has benefited from a day program at the Art and Drama Therapy Institute. Kathleen has Down's Syndrome .

I also read with pleasure that to celebrate their second year, the DVP has announced an extension of their community partnership with StoryCorps, so that people with disabilities will continue to have the option of recording their story.

The DVP -- https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com -- is an extraordinary example of how social-media has the potential to foster activisim, bring together a community that is in great need of mutual support, and encourage personal narrative by people with disabilities on issues of identity .

Thank you Alice for joining this panel and sharing your work, and also for initiating a conversation on the barriers that people face accessing social media!

Disability Visibility Project
"Rrecording, amplifying, and sharing disability stories and culture"
disabilityvisibilityproject.com
November 26, 2016 at 5:21pm