

Checked Out! Episode 3 Transcript

Ed Huffman: Hi everyone, this is Ed Huffman-Director of Teaching and Learning Technologies at the University of Nevada, Reno. We are often better known as 'TLT'. TLT supports the academic mission of the university through support of instructional design and technology, in addition to the technology located in university classrooms, collaboration rooms, and other academic spaces. This encompasses the support of the university's learning management system, Webcampus, and other instructional technologies such as Zoom and Turnitin.

Since Governor Sisolak directed the university to close campus, TLT's duties have grown tremendously in a very short amount of time. It's our job to support faculty and students, both learning and teaching remotely. Our campus relies heavily on technology, but never more than right now.

To give you a little context, in a normal month before the pandemic, the university accommodated just under around 900 Zoom meetings. Compare that with the month of April where we conducted over 35,000 Zoom meetings. Our video servers saw a 266% increase in the number of minutes watched over the same time period.

This is the third episode of 'Checked Out', a podcast from University Libraries and Teaching and Learning Technologies. The show is our outlet to share incredible stories from an unbelievable time that is unfolding around us. This week our hosts interviewed Kathy Hanselman, an instructional designer for TLT who is instrumental in helping our faculty and students transition to teaching and learning remotely. Thank you for listening! We hope you stay safe and stay healthy. Enjoy the show!

Sasha Soleta: Thank you Ed for that introduction. I am Sasha.

Sean Busey: I am Sean and welcome to episode 3 of 'Checked out', the University Libraries podcast. How are you doing?

Sasha: I am doing fine, I did do something pretty amazing, Shawn! I was working in my bedroom and I decided that I did not want to be in there anymore so I moved my whole office set up downstairs to my dining room table.

Sean: Mm-hmm

Sasha: So It's like I changed my world, man! haha

Sean: See and I actually think that might be the lasting legacy of this as far as working at the library. They are going to have to set the place up like Google with slides and furniture because after this we are going to be asked to sit at a desk for 8 hours and none of us are going to be having it.

Saha: I mean...

Sean: NONE OF US.

Sasha: To Be real in my everyday real normal pre-COVID job, I was up and down a lot, and thankfully my boss doesn't mind if I'm pacing back and forth in my cube like a caged mongoose trying to get out.

Sean: See I sit right in front my boss's cube and I feel like if I just stood there and started pacing or like rocking back and forth I would get this "Shawn... are you okay...?" then I would be like... "NOOOO!!!" So speaking of cages... I feel like they are the library's best kept secret kind of kept in their own little area, under lock and key, so we interviewed TLT today hence that wonderful introduction from Ed.

Sasha: yes

Shawn: We interviewed basically just about the indescribable amount of work that went into making this campus function remotely.

Sasha: Mm-hmm

Sean: The numbers that Ed shared in that intro are absolutely astounding!

Sasha: They really are.

Sean: Wow! and thank you guys!

Sasha: Thank you so much for working with Zoom, for working with Canvas, for working with all these different moving parts to make online classes a thing!

Sean: Yup

Sasha: Just mind exploded-

Sean: Yup

Sasha:-like I couldn't-

Sean: Yeah

Sasha: there's so many parts, so many gears, and you had to make them all work together in a precise way so everybody could get the same quality of education. It's truly amazing what TLT did to get everything going.

Sean: It really is. So we are happy to say that they've come through sane enough for at least one of them to have this interview with us.

Sasha: Ooooh! I didn't think-

Sean: Although-

Sasha: that's why we got the interview with her because she's the only sane one left.

Sean: Yeah, that's... we've been chatting with Bowen in Teams but he's going nuts.

Shasha: *chuckles*

Sean: but, you speak to their proficiency with all of those things. I think this episode that Bowen needs to get better and ESPN's Fantasy Football management... and with that, here's our interview with TLT. Sean: So our guest today, we have Kathy Hanselman an instructional designer from Teaching and Learning Technologies is here with us today. Thank you for joining us today!

Sasha: And let's get started! So Kathy, could you just kind of introduce yourself and give us a brief overview of what TLT and more specifically the Instructional Design Team does and what you do within the department.

Kathy Hanselman: Well, our main focus is helping instructors use technology to teach as it would sound like from our names. So a lot of what we do is helping instructors use Webcampus which is the learning management system that UNR uses but its also helping instructors to use things like Zoom and different tools within the campus, making video lectures, and making video assignments and things like that, which is our usual task, we are usually just supporting when an instructor is trying to do something new, or trying to find a more efficient way to get their materials to their students or more interaction in their classes. Obviously that's kind of changed in the past couple weeks.

Sean: Mm-hmm, sure. So that said, over the past couple of weeks give us a brief overview of what your team did to transition the campus to remote learning.

Kathy: Well, we actually did quite a bit. I think that we were kind of watching this come down the pike for a while. I know that when they started closing universities in china, that's when we kinda started to be like "what are they doing over there? How are they doing this?" not even really expecting it to get to us but just kinda seeing how a university might rapidly transition to online learning. What had happened to University of Washington, that's when we really hit the ground running and started doing major fast work. Immediately we turned out a class that was aimed at instructors that was called 'coronavirus: transitioning to teaching remotely'. and we basically developed that in about two days based on a bunch of other material that we had created and that we kind of just pushed together into a class that was just a ton of resources including a little bit of -you know- here's what you've been doing in your face-to-face class and here's maybe a way that you can translate it to online or things you can think about when you're teaching remotely. We ended up dumping everybody who was teaching in the spring into that class, whether they wanted it or not. Hopefully, they enjoyed it, hopefully, they didn't feel like they were put upon with it. The idea behind that was just providing as much information as possible so for some instructors, there may have been things that they weren't planning on using and for some instructors that may have been like "wow! I have never even heard of this tool before and now I want to try it out." So that was our big first focus and that actually came in really handy because I think the day we finished was the day that we kinda got the "and we are going to go online after spring break!" alert from the President. Kind of directly after that, we were working on a student resources course so that it would kind of work in tandem with the instructor resources so if an instructor who created-you know- if students were going to be participating in a peer-review in class and the instructor said "okay! now we are moving it online and I learned how to put it online, we need to show the students how to participate online too." So its kind of the "okay from the student point of view here's how you use these tools, here's some tips, here's some things you need to know working with these Webcampus things. A big thing obviously was working with Zoom from the instructor and student point of view

Sean: Mm-hmm

Kathy: I think that with that, the instructors had to learn a lot and the students had to learn a lot, kind of together at the same time in their first lecture. So, we were providing information on that and trying to basically give as much information as possible up front, but also be available for questions once instructors or students had started using these tools and started being like "holy cow, what's going on here? I don't know how to use this." Along with we've been doing a ton of Zoom sessions on Zoom sessions because I think a big thing with that is that a lot of -I don't know about you, before I started using Zoom which was just last semester, I was kinda terrified of it. You know, it just seemed like it was going to be way harder than it was and I think that for a lot of instructors especially they had never intended to ever use such a tool so having them just kind of jump into a session to see how it works was like "oh this is easier than I thought it would be!"

Sean: That's good!

Kathy: Yeah! Yeah, I think most people find it more intuitive once you get in than you might have thought before.

Sean: Yeah, when I first used it I didn't realize it would be so intuitive to use. It was refreshingly easy because all a sudden, I was working from home and then the next day at like 8 A.M. you have a Zoom meeting. Well, I hope it's easy to figure out!

Kathy: Yeah and I'm hoping that students kind of have the same reaction. I know that of course there have been issues and we have had a lot of people talking about students not having the equipment and that's obviously been an issue and maybe students who don't have reliable internet at home, so kind of working with students to find ways past the equipment issues and also with instructors to... kind of realize that their students may not have the equipment and the internet connection and everything to completely rely and require them to participate in synchronous sessions, so one solution to that is just like instructors know you can record these and make them available to students when maybe they have more time or they can find the equipment, it may not be at your exact class time but they can still access the materials you had. There's been a lot of troubleshooting too and I think that it's been a really exciting time to be an instructional designer. I would say it's probably the most excitement I've had in my professional career and I've been doing this for 10 years. So I don't know... I'm feeling like a really big part of the team.

Sean: Yeah haha... so how- I mean obviously this was a quick process. This unfolded over how many weeks?

Kathy: Umm... I would say we started working on the transitioning to teaching online course the week before spring break and the student resources were over spring break and then dumping into constant workshop and sessions and being available to instructors. As they might have called into our office they were Zoom'ing into our living rooms so it was kind of -yeah- it overlapped a two week period between when we kind of decided that this was happening, we need to prepare for it, to actually saying "okay students and faculty, here you go! Call us with questions or Zoom us with questions."

Sean: and do you have a number I guess of how many courses you've set up? How many sections I guess you set up?

Kathy: Umm... actually I couldn't tell you because every section is different, every instructor took a different route

Sean: sure

Kathy: on how to approach this... some went would okay... we're just fully moving my Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:15 class onto Zoom and everything else can stay the same. Some instructors decided to record videos and not do any synchronous work. So everybody kind of had a different thing but I would say that it was hopefully almost every instructor who's teaching spring looked over the materials we had and kind of decided where to go from there. I could tell you that in that first week that we moved online and working from home, that was- I was helping people like the full 8 hours of the day. It was Zoom call after Zoom call after Zoom call. Pausing for a minute to let my voice to rest, then, you know, writing 5 emails in that time so... *chuckles*

Sean:Right

Sasha: With the whole transition of going fully online, what kind of feedback have you been receiving from students and faculty about this transition?

Kathy: Why I would say I haven't heard that much from students. I have heard from students through faculty. Kind of how they've heard their students reacting to what's happened. From the faculty point of view one thing I really appreciate that we're hearing- first of all: we didn't know you existed and now we do and that's pretty exciting because sometimes I feel like we've just been hidden away in our hole on the fourth floor of the Knowledge Center and people don't know what we're doing up there, so now people do! and they know that we're here to help them and that we're -you know- professionals in the field and have a lot of good ideas and can help them pretty quickly. I think another great thing I've heard from faculty is that they didn't realize the things just like Zoom like I was just saying with it, not realizing how intuitive it can be and also -you know- how useful it can be. Same thing with Webcampus and Webcampus tools.

Having to do everything on Webcampus means the instructors are kind of learning about the quizzes and the discussions and collaborations and the way peer-review works. Tools that they never had to investigate or know about before and now kind of say "okay, this is actually something I'm going to take into my face-to-face class next semester.... hopefully" Or into the future where they can -you know- cut out some class time and move some other things online that could be more like assignments or peer-review or activities like that and open up more time in class for discussion or additional activities that are more active learning based. So, kind of just hearing that they're excited about the tools they are learning about.

Sean: Mm-hmm

Kathy: As far as what we're hearing from them about students there have been some really cool assignments and how they've turned out and how students -you know- students not knowing that they can use Zoom, that they can start Zoom sessions. One Spanish instructor had his students I think it was kind of a free-for-all assignment but he had 2 students who remotely -so in two separate places- recorded a music video together. It was in Spanish and so I think they were using Zoom, they may have been using a different tool but it was kind of like look at the challenge that my students didn't- he didn't tell them that they had to do that... they just kind of took it and flew. So there's some things where it's like "Okay, with these weird times we're gonna get some really cool innovation from students and from faculty."

Sean: Right, that's really neat!

Sasha: Have you gotten any like feedback from administration like President's office or anything like that about how people are handling things or...

Kathy: There's a lot of -a big move to support as many people as possible, so a lot things that we see - you know- coming down from emails that are to the entire university and emails that our to our office through my director Ed Huffman letting us know like "hey this was really helpful we want to see a little more added to that" so they're being very reactive in what they're hearing from instructors and students and kind of passing that to us and saying "okay, maybe that's something you could add a little more to." Looking forward to the summer, we're putting together a lot of materials for that and I think that's something that the administration's kind of like "Okay, we know you guys are working on this, we would like to give a little bit more direction on how it would work for faculty."

Sean: So you actually just mentioned for the summer session that the faculty seems to be a little more engaged with Zoom as an instructional tool. Is anything special changing over the summer session? Is anything else kind of being added to it or changed in any way?

Kathy: As you probably know the summer session courses that are starting before June 30 are all going to be remote instruction also. What happened in spring was an emergency transition it had to happen right away, really fast, and it had to be to remote instruction. So remote is just kind of taking what happened face-to-face in a classroom and putting it online and it was, again, reactionary and fast and maybe not as well designed as it could have been. It got the job done... hopefully. Moving into the Summer we're going to be trying to help instructors to have a little more intentional design so maybe not just "okay, I'm moving my class onto a Zoom session and that's the way it's going to be." Maybe it will be more like "we're going to do a Zoom session for this activity but I'm going to create a lecture video beforehand so you can watch the lecture video and there's less synchronous time together or here's written lecture this or here's links to other things. Basically, now that -we're hoping now that instructors have a little more time to prepare that they can do a little bit more intentional and design work that can help students get through the material in a really successful way.

Sasha: Like more of an intentional online class, like if you were in regular semester and you took the online section instead of the normal section.

Sean: Mm-Hmm

Kathy: Exactly! and with that there's a lot to think about as far as what you can rely on your students to know and to be prepared to do if they know from the very beginning that they are going to be fully online. letting your students know "hey we are going to be doing Zoom sessions twice a week, you need to have a reliable internet, webcam, mic, all of this, that might be something you treat like a required material in the class almost like a textbook. In a class like most of our spring classes you know we assume that those students have a phone or a computer and that's not a reasonable assumption, not everybody does. Especially not one that might work for this sort of exchange. So I think that looking at it that way, maybe an instructor doesn't want to do Zoom sessions, maybe they prefer to do really well thought out and edited and beautiful lecture notes that cover everything in a little bit more in-depth, and -you know- technology-reliant. That's perfectly fine too as long as that's the plan from

the beginning and the instructor has put aside time to develop the class and develop the materials well.

Sean: Right

Sasha: All right, so how can faculty or students learn more about the work TLT does?

Sean: Now that they know you exist.

Sasha: Like where could they go... yeah now they you now exist, where can they go and like how can they contact you? Are you guys doing email? Phone? What's the best way to talk to y'all?

Kathy: In this time we're all still working from home... I'm in my basement right now. What we're asking instructors and students to do is to contact at your email address that our entire team checks regularly which is IDT@unr.edu. That's the fastest way to get in touch because of all 6 or 7 of us are checking that all day while we are working from home. So we kind of just grab whichever emails come through, whoever has the know-how to answer it, answers that question and kind of enters into the 1-on-1 email conversation or jumps into a Zoom session with the instructor having questions. As I said we're not in our office right now so it's probably not best to call our line, even if you really want to talk with somebody. We will usually answer the email and then set up the Zoom session which I personally think is a better bet than trying to talk on the phone because with Zoom I can show you my screen or I can take control of your screen and actually show you how to do the thing that you're asking about more than trying to describe it, which in previous years of doing this, I know that sometimes I can say "No you click right here" and the person on the phone is saying "I am" and I don't know what they're looking at so...

Sean: Some other different websites or...

Kathy: Yeah... what's a web campus? haha

Sean: *chuckles*

Kathy: So I almost think that this is something I prefer to do when we're back in the office using the Zoom for tutorials helps and...

Sean: Right, it's amazing how necessity -you know- needing to adjust to something quickly can really open your eyes to some amazing resources that are available. I think in the library, for the longest time, there was sort of this perception of TLT, almost as referees in a sports game. If they do their job, you don't know they're there, but this situation has sort of changed that for a lot better. It's nice to hear you talk about not only Zoom but Webcampus and things like Audacity. What other functions do you perform that makes TLT such a valuable asset?

Kathy: We help with video creation. Kaltura is a built-in video platform that's in Webcampus that students and faculty both can use to create videos. There's not really that many editing capabilities with it right now but it is good for doing things like a video discussion or even a video lecture. We also help with people who would like to come into our office and edit videos using Camtasia. So there's a lot of video support. There's also I think really important and probably the experience that most of

campus has had with our office is with accessibility. Don Massey in our office does all of the basic web accessibility training that basically everybody who is in an instructional role has to take.

Sean: Mm-Hmm

Kathy: and he also helps with accessibility as far as PDF's, Microsoft products, things like that just kind of helping out with accessibility questions in instructional materials. We also we do a number of different trainings that are maybe not focused on this time right now but that are workshops for faculty to work through over the course of the semester. We have a couple - Teaching with Technology is a cohort-based program where instructors get together once a week and work through materials and do improvements to their class based on what they learned.

We have created an online course delivery online course that instructors have gone through and we've had 2 semesters of that. The instructors who were in it this semester I think we were in week 6, they were turning in their final portfolios when we got the call to go online and all of them were "Wow! I'm glad I did this when I did!" So, we are developing more things like that. That's more like our general all-the-time things.

One thing I have noticed in this time especially but it's been happening of course before this as well is that sometimes instructors need to hear that they are doing a good job. So I think we've been doing a lot of moral support. There's been a lot of... I've given a lot of atta'boy's and atta'girl's to people I'm talking with for trying things out and -you know- maybe not getting it right on the first try but you're getting there and um... there's been a lot of almost like psychological support. I think that's valuable all the time and I think that it's really necessary right now because faculty are really working hard hand trying so hard and really trying to do the best by their students that they can and I think they need to hear that they are doing a good job and that they're doing the best that they can and maybe it's not absolutely perfect, no one's expecting it to be perfect right now. They need to hear that from somebody.

Sean: Yeah, yeah, it's good that they are hearing it though. I mean I know a lot of professors I had in my day were very technology averse and to have people not only help make this easy but to be reminded that "you're doing okay!" Probably more important than most people would realize.

Sasha: So just over the course of the interview you've been talking a lot about faculty and assisting them, do you guys do a lot of student support? Or do you direct student support somewhere else? Or how does...

Kathy: Well generally with this our role is more to help faculty but in that, it is to help faculty be able to help students. So that's our main- our direct contact with students is maybe not that direct- it's through faculty. But in doing so it's providing instructors the know-how and the materials on how to help their students. So a lot of times we are doing a lot things like writing actual student-facing language for instructors to pass onto their students and things like that but it's not usually students calling us with questions.

We do get that sometimes if a student has no idea how to do a thing on Webcampus and the instructor doesn't know how to do it either, we might get looped into kind of help. Usually, that ends up being something where the instructor and the student are on email. We answer the question for the student and the instructor's kind of getting that free tutorial also so that they can answer future similar questions from the students. A lot of times students are directed more to contact the Help Desk when they have questions about specific technology things. A lot of times its more of-with students it's an easier answer or a specific to that student answer. So, if there's a problem with the class at the design

level, the instructor made a choice, maybe they set a quiz to end yesterday instead of today. That's something that we can help with, that we can help the instructor go in and fix or -you know- if the instructors let us know we can fix it for them. But if one student can't access the quiz and all the other students can then it's probably something that has to do with the student's own computer or connection or password, that's a big one. A lot of times these are things that are a little bit easier for the Help Desk to help with.

Sean: I can say anecdotally we occasionally, in my department, Technical Services, also on the fourth floor we get the occasional student knocking on our side door thinking we're instructional design and I usually just tell them to ask for Bowen. So...

Kathy: Yeah, Bowen is a busy guy.

Sasha: yeah!

Sean: Yeah, and I like to help with that as much as I can. Well thank you very much for being with us today! Anything else you would like to add?

Kathy: Not that I can really think of... just that if anybody has any questions, don't hesitate to ask! Remember that we are here to help you. I get a lot of instructors who say "I'm sorry I take up so much of your time!" and I have to reply "It's literally my job! I'm here for you to take up my time and me to help you." Even if you think your question is dumb, it's a question you need answered so it's not dumb. So, don't hesitate. Talk to us!

Sean: Okay

Sasha: All right! Cool, well thank you for joining us again. Thanks for being a part of this! Thanks for everything you've done to transition over to online learning.

Sean: Yeah! That's a lot of work. A lot of hard work, thank you.

Kathy: It's been fun!
everybody laughs

Sasha: That was a great interview! I love her!

Sean: That was! I feel like she was really well prepared.

Sasha: Uh-huh.

Sean: Everyone out there listening, you have no idea how happy we are right now. We feel like we just set a new standard for 'Checked out'.

Sasha: Yeah, the bar has been set!

Sean: Yeah, yeah I mean...

Sasha: It's on! I mean sure she made us look totally unprepared in comparison, but you know what? I'm willing to let that one slide.

Sean: I will let our guests shine if it means we look a little rusty. I think that's okay.

Sasha: Rusty! That's a word for it, I guess.

Sean: That's why we were selected because compared to us, all the guests will look good.

Sasha: I mean why do you think I chose you for my podcasting partner, Sean? You just make me look good all the time in comparison.

Sean: I mean... I dispute that.

Sasha: Ouch!!

Sean: No, I feel like that was a good interview and it's really good to hear from TLT. That group has been working real hard.

Sasha: They really have! One of our fantasy football friends is in TLT as well and he is VERY BUSY.

Sean: Unfortunately, he can't use the pandemic as an excuse for his performance these last couple years in our league but...

Sasha: I mean... you know he's going to try to use it to get out of the season this year, just like "I've been so busy with work"

Sean: "I don't wanna look at a computer again!"

Sasha: Which I assume is gonna be like everybody in the world after this end... just like "I'm just gonna start writing letters by hand now."

Sean: I'm gonna start using the video recording function of Zoom and record trash talk messages to send to him.

Sasha: I think he would appreciate that as the Zoom guru that he is.

Sean: Yeah, he would love it! Actually I know Bowen, he would send us feedback and critiques on how to do it better so...

Sasha: Yeaah... I don't think it's worth it actually.

Sean: All right. So, yeah, thanks again to Kathy. Should we do the formal credits now?

Sasha: It's time for formal credits! So our hosts today were me! Sasha Soleta and Sean Busey.

Sean: That's me!!

Sasha: Our guest today was Kathy Hanselman with the Instructional Design Team. She's an instructional designer with them. And a special thanks to Ed Huffman for the introduction today.

Sean: The library's podcast team as always is Maggie Ressel, Michelle Rebaleati, Luka Starmer, Jill Stockton, and Reed Barrus.

Sasha: And our episode music today was "Better Days" by Lewen Wikstrom courtesy of Universal Production Music.

Sean: And until next time this is 'Checked Out', Checking out!