Tanya Domi: Hi, this is Tanya Domi. Welcome to the Thought Project, recorded at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Fostering groundbreaking research and scholarship in the arts, social sciences and sciences. In this space we talk with faculty and doctoral students about the big thinking and big ideas generating cutting edge research, informing New Yorkers and the world.

Tanya Domi: This week’s guest include Matt Gold and Luke Waltzer. Matt Gold is an Associate Professor of English in Digital Humanities at the Graduate Center, where he holds teaching appointments in the PhD program in English, the MA program in Liberal Studies and the Doctoral Certificate Programs in Interactive Technology and Pedagogy in American Studies. Matt is the director of the CUNY Academic Commons, Co-Director of the CUNY Digital Humanities Initiative, Director of the GC Digital Scholarship Lab and Director of the GC Digital Fellows Program. In all these roles, he works to integrate digital tools and methods into the core research and teaching mission of the Graduate Center.

Tanya Domi: Luke Waltzer is the Director of the Teaching and Learning Center at the Graduate Center where he supports Graduate Center students in their teaching across the CUNY system, and works on a variety of pedagogical and digital projects. He holds a PhD in History from the Graduate Center and serves as Director of Community Projects for the CUNY Academic Commons. He is also a faculty member in the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy Certificate Program, and also directs the development of [Vocat] an open source multimedia evaluation and assessment tool. He serves on the editorial collective of the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy.

Tanya Domi: Welcome back to the Thought Project, Matt and Luke.


Matthew Gold: Thanks so much. We’re excited to be here.

Tanya Domi: So I consider both of you, not only scholars and teachers, but both of you are pretty geeky as far as the integration of technology and teaching, and how technology has really changed the way we learn, and how we capture and record scholarly research in higher education. So Matt, as the director of the CUNY Academic Commons, it appears you’ve had quite a year and you’re celebrating your 10th anniversary.

Matthew Gold: It's a tremendously exciting moment for this project that began on a shoe string with just a few members, and has grown organically over a decade to include almost 20,000 members of the CUNY community. Connecting them in lots of ways, enabling them to teach courses to share their research, and to build communities together in an open space. And I think it's at this point, the largest open source project in CUNY. It's hosted by the Graduate Center serving the
entire CUNY system, every single CUNY campus. And it's the best project I've ever worked on.

Tanya Domi: Full disclosure, I have my course website from Hunter College on the CUNY Commons and I have to thank Luke Waltzer for that, and his role as Director of Teaching and Learning. And Luke talk about this expansion into undergrad access and how that came about.

Luke Waltzer: Well, it's really exciting and has invigorated the project in really ways we didn't anticipate until we did it. For the first few years that the Commons was running, we were very concerned about being able to support the potential number of students who we'd have if we opened it up to undergraduate teaching. And there's 250,000 registered matriculated undergraduates at CUNY, we're on a tight budget, and we have a small staff. And we really care about the support that we give our users. But over time we saw so many requests come in from faculty members who wanted their students to experience the communities that exist within the Commons and to connect with teaching and learning and scholarship that was happening across the university.

Luke Waltzer: We got tired of telling these folks no. So when the Teaching and Learning Center opened in 2015, we were able to increase our capacity for support a little bit for open source teaching and learning projects across the university. We said, let's do it. And we opened up the doors of the Commons to undergraduate courses, with the idea that this influx of a new group of users, and a new type of use would really help us think about how to keep the system vibrant, and evolving in dialogue with the users within the community.

Luke Waltzer: And it's just exploded, the activity on the Commons, over the past four years, and has shifted some of our development priorities in ways that are really exciting for us to think about as people who exist at the nexus of scholarship teaching and learning and software development.

Matthew Gold: And just to give you some idea of both CUNY scale and the impact that teaching has had on the Commons. In about a year and a half, we went from 9,000 members to 19,000 members.

Tanya Domi: It's huge.

Matthew Gold: The CUNY is so large. And the need is there. There are faculty and students want to be learning, and teaching, and conversing with one another in a space that has flexibility, where they can build things, where they can use software platforms that are actually used out there in the real world. So this has had a tremendous impact on the Commons, and it's been wonderful for the community.
Tanya Domi: So a lot of people, or many people, might not know that the Commons was originally funded by the CUNY Central Office of Academic Affairs right from the beginning. And it's housed here, as you said, at the Graduate Center. So beyond the explosion, which is really fantastic. This also includes the CUNY Community Colleges.

Matthew Gold: Yes.

Tanya Domi: Can both of you talk about that?

Matthew Gold: Sure. Well, just to talk a little bit about the structure of the Commons.

Tanya Domi: Please.

Matthew Gold: It began as a project of the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs. There's a committee, a CUNY committee on academic technology that was chaired for many years by George Adi. And the project was started under Executive Vice Chancellor Alexander Logue who supported the project. And we were able to build it out and we were thinking about where to host it. And we had wonderful partners here at the Graduate Center in our IT division, who agreed to host it and have worked with us over the years to host and support a platform.

Matthew Gold: It's built on WordPress and Buddy Press, which are open source systems and platforms. And when you think about it, when CUNY wanted to look for a place to host a kind of centralized platform, the Graduate Center was the perfect place, both because of the great people we have working here in IT. But also because of our position as the university center able to serve all of the colleges. So the mission of the Commons from the very beginning has been to connect people across campuses and help realize a vision of a single CUNY, to help a faculty member who's teaching at Brooklyn College connect to a faculty member at City College, even though they're in entirely different boroughs. And even though we are all working in the same city, there aren't enough opportunities to connect. So providing the space for a virtual connection around areas of interest has been wonderful.

Matthew Gold: And it includes community colleges as you mentioned, senior colleges, graduate schools, professional schools, everyone with a CUNY address is able to create an account. And the Commons over that time has really become a network of people. And one thing I would just say is that our philosophy has always been that we want people to opt in, not to opt out. So we took a lot of care as we built the community over time, not to make people feel like they were being conscripted into this platform. But really to kind of create an attractive place that people would want to join. And it's one of the most gratifying things about this project over time, that so many people have gravitated to the Commons, and have created spaces there.
Luke Waltzer: I can give you a couple of specific Community College centered projects that the Commons has facilitated. One of our missions at the Teaching and Learning Center in conjunction with colleagues at the Humanities Alliance and the Futures Initiative is to really raise the visibility of community college teaching and careers within the experience that Graduate Center students have. And one of the pathways we have to do that is through work on the Commons, by making sure that those communities feel welcome and supported in their digital teaching, and learning, and scholarship needs.

Luke Waltzer: So two projects directly engaging with Community Colleges. One is the pressing public issues project, which is a collaboration between the Teaching and Learning Center and the James Gallery, and the Center for Humanities to pair artists with faculty members who want students to create arts engaged projects that are public facing on some contemporary issue.

Tanya Domi: That's very interesting. Yeah.

Luke Waltzer: And we fund these projects and fully support them. And they've been running in Community College campuses for the past two semesters. And each of those courses has a site on the CUNY Academic Commons that is facilitating their work. A second project is at the Borough of Manhattan Community College who has a very advanced project around supporting open educational resources which are freely available, re mixable, teaching and learning artifacts that CUNY has invested with state funding significantly and over the past few years.

Luke Waltzer: And BMCC now has their own platform, called the Open Lab, which is a grant funded project that Matt directed with NEH funding over the past few years to make the Commons accessible to other universities. But before they had that platform, they were building out a Faculty Fellows Program using the Commons. They had 40 faculty who were together for a summer, who were thinking about teaching with OER in open spaces and they use the Commons to facilitate that work, both the collaborative work-

Tanya Domi: And like to develop it.

Luke Waltzer: ... to develop and then ultimately to teach it. And that has allowed BMCC to build the infrastructure to be able to support their own platform, which we're really happy to see.

Tanya Domi: That's leaning forward, I would say. So tell us about this new interface that was developed last year that apparently has been part of the growth of the Commons.

Matthew Gold: One of the things that having so many people join the platform for the purpose of teaching helped us see, is that some areas where we needed improvements. So one of the things we gave a lot of thought and attention to is how people
create spaces on the Commons. And it's something to emphasize about the Commons is that we are not just a platform that exists. We are a platform that changes over time. We develop things in response to our users. That's part of what free software, open source software is about, is that we can listen to our members and change things about the platform.

Matthew Gold: So one of the things we heard and saw were that people were uncertain about how to create a blog or how to create a group. And so we created a whole new interface that guides people kind of through those choices, that gives them templates so that if they're using the Commons for a specific purpose, like a teaching site, or a portfolio, or for a research site, that they could start with a preset template. And of course, have complete freedom after they enable it to mix things up as they choose.

Matthew Gold: But it was all part of an effort to make it easier to kind of get started on the Commons. We are very active developers. We do two releases a year on the software platform and our development team, I can't say enough things about them. Our principal developers, Boone Girgis and Raymond Ho, are extraordinarily accomplished. They began with us, especially Boone, began with us as a kind of new developer, has since become a core contributor to WordPress and Buddy Press. And you can really see that the code that we've developed for the Commons has spread out through those larger projects to millions of other sites through the WordPress and Buddy Press core software.

Matthew Gold: When we develop a new feature for the Commons, we do it for our members, but we also do it to kind of test new things. We then sort of move them up the free software stack so that they can help others. And that's part of our identity as an open source system at a public educational institution, is that we are thinking not just about ourselves, but of the greater good and the larger communities around this work.

Luke Waltzer: One of the challenges in developing the Commons, continuing to keep it fresh is how do we manage the complexity of the system? And to make that more legible, visible, to new users, right? We want people to be able to see all of the things that they can do if they build out their work on the Commons, but we don't want them to be overwhelmed. And now that we're welcoming in additional faculty members and undergraduate students, we had to spend a lot of time, and take a lot of care to make sure that the full functionality of the Commons was accessible to those folks.

Luke Waltzer: So that's been the kind of driving ethos behind our development over the past couple of years. I mean, I think it's led to some really unique solutions that are only possible within the context of the Commons because we're in dialogue with our user base. So we have ways to create templates for different kinds of academic uses, whether it's a portfolio site, a departmental site, or a teaching site.

20191204_Thought Project Podcast Gold and Waltze... (Completed 12/12/19) Transcript by Rev.com
Luke Waltzer: And that gives new users who are new to the system a headstart, in getting their heads around how they can unlock its full functionality.

Tanya Domi: Yeah, so you're not starting from scratch.


Tanya Domi: I get it. And the other thing I want to take note of this, which I think is reflective of CUNY itself, is the open access, the culture of open access, the culture of engagement in collaborative learning. There is no question someone once said to me, "All learning happens through sharing."

Matthew Gold: Yeah.

Tanya Domi: And in this interactive, full on engagement platform, it's really easy and it reflects the very open public facing university that is accessible, which is really what CUNY is, I think, on so many different levels.

Matthew Gold: Absolutely, I mean, I like to say that it shares the intellectual fabric of CUNY, because what you see when you go to the Commons are actual people, actual members, students in courses, faculty sharing their research, people who are on staff, and in committees sharing their work. It's like a vision of the work of CUNY made apparent and we certainly provide lots of ways for people to make their content private if they choose. No one's forced to sort of make everything accessible. But I think it's definitely true that the guiding ideology of the site is really based on kind of sharing and what we gain by connecting with each other and making our work open.

Luke Waltzer: In addition to that being a kind of a reality of the platform, it's also, I think, an apt description of the process around the platform that Matt's led so ably over the past decade. We meet every month as a sub committee of the Committee on Academic Technology, which has governed the Commons. And then we meet as a Commons team also every month. And that brings in folks who share the values that you laid out of openness, commitment to the people of the city of New York, ultimately commitment to our students and to our research, brings them together every month to talk about this platform.

Luke Waltzer: But we're really talking about our work. We're talking about CUNY We're sharing ideas We're sharing an investment in the institution. And I think that energy and that commitment and that love has kind of found its way into the platform itself. It's a really exciting element of our work, and of the colleagues who've contributed so much to the Commons over the past decade.

Tanya Domi: So Matt, you made a report on the Commons by the numbers, and some pretty impressive data points. You want to talk about that.
Matthew Gold: I think we're soon going to break 20,000 members. We're getting very close. I mean the numbers in the report you're looking at-

Tanya Domi: Right.

Matthew Gold: ... are already eclipsed because every day, every week more people are joining. When the Commons first started, I used to get a notification in my email inbox of every new member. I would go out onto the Commons and I would write a little note saying, "Hey, welcome, thanks for being here. Great to see you here." Especially when we started opening it up to teaching, I had hundreds of emails flooding my inbox constantly and I had to put those into a special folder.

Tanya Domi: Let the go, yeah.

Matthew Gold: Yeah. So the growth has really been amazing. But I think there's the numbers, the sort of the sheer growth of blogs and groups and sites. But what I think is also really interesting is just the different types of uses people are putting the Commons to. So just to give three examples, we've got faculty members at John Jay who have created a research project on the New York history of slavery in New York. And have created a tremendous database that they share that has been profiled in all sorts of news outlets. They are sharing their research through the Commons, because it's a place where they can share their work openly.

Matthew Gold: We have people doing OER projects on the Commons. We have City College right now is using the Commons for many of its Intro to Composition courses and students are creating portfolios at the end of the semester on the Commons. We also have committees creating spaces on the Commons. We have courses. So it's sort of one of the things I think about. As a faculty member, you report on your research, your teaching, and your service. And one of the things I love about the Commons is that because of its flexibility, it meets all three of those needs for so many different members of the community.

Tanya Domi: So Luke, when it comes to teaching and it's always, I guess, it's always been a teaching platform, but it's becoming much more robust and active now for the Commons, for the classroom and both of you have mentioned the integrated open educational resources, and how that assists onboarding for students and faculty. So as I said, the baseline is that we know all learning is shared. This tool just seems to like magnify that it in 100,000 different ways, in sharing.

Tanya Domi: And we talk about New York city and we talk about 25 colleges, and we're all in different boroughs. But you could be in Europe and I know people have looked at my website from Europe for example, and you're talking about John Jay getting media coverage on their project on history of slavery. It's very different because there's a Commons at Columbia, but it's not public facing. It's intra, within the university, which is very much the way that culture is there. This
seems to have a lot of potential to do even more in terms of teaching and learning, but what are some of your ideas about that?

Luke Waltzer: Oh, so many ideas.

Tanya Domi: Yeah, I'm sure.

Luke Waltzer: I mean, when Matt launched the Commons a decade ago, the tagline for the Commons was, "What will you build?" Right, and that is how we start our conversations with teachers who want to teach on the Commons for the first time. What do you want to accomplish? What can this platform facilitate that other platforms can't? And a lot of that goes back to the openness that you referenced. Faculty members who want students to potentially connect with students in another class, at another institution, can do so easily through the Commons. And we've seen that.

Luke Waltzer: Faculty members who want students to do publicly engaged project. An example is a Fellow at the Teaching and Learning Center who's also done work as an OER Fellow in the library here in [Asvanyo 00:21:15] Garcia, was teaching two courses at Lehman college. One was a heritage language, a course in Spanish to future educators. These are students who spoke Spanish in the home but had never studied it formally. They were all studying to become teachers. And she was also teaching an L2 Spanish course for folks who were new to the language.

Luke Waltzer: And she was dissatisfied with the kind of assumptions that exist within Spanish language textbooks, which construct this kind of Pan-Latin experience for engaging with Spanish when Spanish is engaged with in a localized way. Right? The Spanish that's spoken in Mexico is different from the Spanish that's spoken in Madrid. So she had her heritage language students use the Spanish that was spoken in New York City to design the teaching and learning materials that the L2 students would learn with.

Luke Waltzer: And they went into El Barrio and they shot videos and they did interviews with storekeepers and they made OER materials with Spanish vocabulary words.

Tanya Domi: Inaccessible through Spanish.

Luke Waltzer: Inaccessible public. And then had to think about how this would be taught with, so there's a kind of a recursiveness there, where the students are thinking about their learning at different levels. They're learning both as ones who are doing it, but also ultimately-

Tanya Domi: It's pedagogy, too.
Luke Waltzer: ... with them, the context-

Tanya Domi: It's pedagogy.


Tanya Domi: Yeah.

Luke Waltzer: The context of their career goals. And they were thinking about a specific audience and Inez is now working with this to think about how it might be broad in terms of have access to other classrooms. Right?

Tanya Domi: So you've given me a media idea. So, anyway.

Matthew Gold: Can I say?

Tanya Domi: Please, please.

Matthew Gold: I mean, so when the Commons was created in the sort of late 2000s, the prevailing educational technology systems, and some of them are still very much with us like Blackboard, they are premised on a model of absolute privacy, and of division between classes. So if you create a class on Blackboard, you know the model is that you and your students are in a private space that is very difficult to share.

Tanya Domi: That's closed.

Matthew Gold: That's closed. You can't see anything if you don't have a login. And the Commons and these open systems are very much more about turning that inside out, and having students not be cloistered in a private space, but instead to be engaging with the world. So the type of project that Luke describes, that's not really possible if the platform itself is not oriented towards openness and sharing. In a lot of ways, I think the Commons has really helped CUNY, which has a longstanding reputation for progressive educational thinking around educational technology, that began with colleagues like Steve Pryor and George Adi, and the creation of the interactive technology and pedagogy program.

Matthew Gold: And that's continued with our MA in Digital Humanities Program, MS in Data Analysis and Visualization. We really have created a platform where CUNY and its students, the faculty and students, can show what they are doing in their work, and use that work not to separate themselves from the world, but instead to engage with it.

Tanya Domi: And it's also, I was going through your annual report looking at in terms of scholarly research, the Commons hosts several journals. The journal of
Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, the Journal of American Drama and Theater, the Journal of Teaching Disability Studies, and includes a broad range of research communities. Can you talk about how these research communities are being built and how they're growing on the Commons?

Matthew Gold: Sure. I mean this is, in part it's a story about open access and technological flexibility. Again, as in teaching, the prevailing model of scholarly publishing, journal publishing especially, has been private subscription based. And I think what we've seen as a general trend in the Academy is that faculty, I give credit to librarians who have been advocating very strongly against these huge publishing conglomerates that make-

Tanya Domi: Like Chase or et cetera.

Matthew Gold: Well, Elsevier is like those kinds of-

Tanya Domi: Right. Right.

Matthew Gold: ... companies are really at the forefront of it. Elsevier making huge profits based on scholarly work. So basically the university pays scholars to write and then them pays again to access their writing for the students. So-

Tanya Domi: Right.

Matthew Gold: ... what we've seen is a whole movement towards open access, towards taking the work of the Academy, and publishing it in ways that are more open and openly accessible. And we've seen this collection of journals gravitate towards the Commons, because it allows them to publish openly, but also to experiment with what a scholarship means. So on the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, for example, we're able to publish videos, we're able to publish sound files, interactive elements, things that are just not really possible in print.

Tanya Domi: I know I actually have shared a podcast with my class-

Matthew Gold: Yeah.

Tanya Domi: ... because we are going to be talking about China's human rights, and I interviewed one of our colleagues here, and from this podcast. And I put it on the course website, which is pretty cool.

Luke Waltzer: Yeah. So in addition to supporting the publication of these journals, the Commons has the facility to support all the editorial work that goes on around that publication. So the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy has a group on the Commons that's private where we keep minutes of meetings, where we post our bylaws, where we post guides to publication. All the work of
the Journal is happening within the same space where the Journal is published, including our development work. We have a staging site where we lay out an issue before we-

Tanya Domi: Before you publish it.

Luke Waltzer: ... publish it. So the system is so robust that it can encompass all of this work which has value not only for sustaining the Journal, but for coalescing a community around the project. And inevitably people who may come in to the Commons solely to work on one project like JITP will say, "Well now I can use the Commons for my course. Or maybe I want to start a magazine and kind of spin something off there." So people learn about the functionality through these project-based spaces on the Commons and that then accelerates other use.

Tanya Domi: That's pretty impressive. I mean, we're talking about the third largest public university system in the country. Have you looked at CUNY and, and U of C, University California, have you guys looked, just for comparative sake-

Matthew Gold: Looked at them in what?

Tanya Domi: ... in terms of similar types of platforms.

Matthew Gold: CUNY, as far as I know, doesn't have a platform like the Commons. They experimented a little bit with one. But you know, I think one of the things that's challenging about creating a platform like the Commons is it's very hard to institute kind of top down. You really need to have a group of people who are excited about it, who believe in it, and to kind of let it grow in a grassroots way. And that's what we've been lucky enough to have at the Commons. And that's that kind of opt-in model I described where-

Tanya Domi: Right. Right.

Matthew Gold: ... from the beginning we've had a group of people excited to use it. But it's something that we've really let grow over time. And in that way, it's not precisely a kind of typical academic technology project. And it's also, although many universities might say, "Hey, yeah, we'd love to have a place where our community can get together." That work of sustaining a community is extremely difficult. It takes a lot of time and energy and care, and we thankfully have a team and a community here that can support that. But it could definitely happen in other places, but you need to have a lot of conditions to be right.

Luke Waltzer: I think New York is a kind of key component in this.

Matthew Gold: Yes.
Luke Waltzer: Right. We're a big system, but we're in a relatively-

Tanya Domi: And it can-

Luke Waltzer: ... smaller place-

Matthew Gold: Yeah.

Tanya Domi: Condensed.

Luke Waltzer: ... smaller place compared to CUNY-

Tanya Domi: Or California. Right.

Luke Waltzer: ... or so people can come together for these monthly meetings. We're all going to see each other at the CUNY IT Conference.

Tanya Domi: Right.

Luke Waltzer: We all go eat pizza together frequently.

Matthew Gold: We have to mention CUNY Pie.

Luke Waltzer: We have to mention CUNY Pie.

Matthew Gold: Yeah.

Luke Waltzer: So you can tell that story. And that's what's exciting about these open platforms. And there are other open platforms out there, and there are other open platforms within CUNY, Blogs at Baruch, which is a project that I worked on at Baruch College that launched at about the same time the Commons did. That project is still going. The Open Lab at City Tech is a project that Matt launched when he was at City Tech, and has been kind of running and flourishing. BMCC has their own version of the open lab, ePortfolio is at McCauley, QWriting at Queens. All of these folks are on the-

Tanya Domi: The Commons.

Luke Waltzer: ... the Commons subcommittee, or team, or inner circle. We share code, we share ideas, we share care for one another's projects. And so a lot of energy has kind of shifted and flowed between them. And that's just a kind of a unique outgrowth of these systems' openness. We can make them do what our community needs them to do. But that's work. Right? And that requires care and commitment. And we've been able to provide that.
Matthew Gold: And I just have to say CUNY Pie, we just have to mention it because it was one of the-

Tanya Domi: CUNY Pie.

Matthew Gold: ... early successes of the Commons.

Tanya Domi: I need the recipe.

Matthew Gold: It was basically a pizza eating group. So we would gather and our-

Luke Waltzer: You thought we were geeky before.

Matthew Gold: Yeah. And we would try to get all the major pizza places in New York and write reviews and it was fun and it was a way to get together. It made a point that we are about more than our academic work and that in some ways the work of teaching, and learning, and doing research was not entirely disconnected from eating really good pizza in New York. And then we wanted to have a space that could bring that all together.

Tanya Domi: Okay. So what's next for the conference?

Luke Waltzer: For CUNY Pie, or for?

Tanya Domi: Well, maybe, I don't know. It's New York. You could eat a lot of different things, right?

Matthew Gold: Yeah, we'll take on.

Luke Waltzer: Yeah, and we will.

Matthew Gold: Dumplings.

Luke Waltzer: We will.

Tanya Domi: Yeah, okay, but what's next for the Commons? What's next?

Matthew Gold: Well, I would say a couple of things. First I don't want to get through this podcast without acknowledging and thanking the team at the CUNY Office of Library Services and the support they've given to the Commons through OER funding. Greg Gosling and Fiddler, Andy McKinney, that support for OER work, which ultimately comes from the state, has been crucial and has helped us build out the Commons as a place for the entire CUNY community to come together for every college and CUNY to make things work.
Matthew Gold: So, we anticipate continuing to build around OER. And that involves a couple of things, one is sort of the Commons as a space to create OER and also the Commons as a teaching space. OER, by the way, is like imagine the textbook of some kind that's-

Tanya Domi: Right.

Matthew Gold: ... freely open and accessible so people can use the Commons to publish their work openly. So the Commons in the space for publishing OER, it's also a space for teaching with OER. One thing that we're working on is connecting the Commons to other platforms. So, for instance, I've been working on a platform called Manifold, which has been sponsored-

Tanya Domi: Yes.

Matthew Gold: ... by the Mellon Foundation-

Tanya Domi: Right.

Matthew Gold: ... and in partnership with University of Minnesota Press and Cast Iron Coding. That is another publication space. And we're trying to create a shared login so that students can log into Manifold using their Commons ID and after we build that out, there's a lot more we could do to sort of connect the two platforms. So we want to continue to work on the interoperability of the Commons with other platforms. Certainly, I think teaching will continue to be a major focus for us. Accessibility is an important issue. We're continually trying to make the Commons work better for all members.

Matthew Gold: We are also concerned about the design of the Commons and we've for a long time been trying to get funding to redesign the Commons, because technology changes and we need to update it. So we've been doing our best to keep it going, but we're moving slowly towards a redesign. And I think that one of the other challenges that I think we also have to start thinking about is as the Commons grows, I mean its speed of growth has just tripled in the last couple of years because of the growth of teaching. And we have to think about how we deal with this enormous trove of content that has been created.

Matthew Gold: Our policies are that we don't delete sites, we don't delete users. So it actually is also a site where alumni can come back and sort of basically have WordPress site hosting for a long time. And at the same time, as the Commons grows, we need to think about how we handle all this content. And I would just say the most recent release we did was really thinking about how to kind of display the courses that we share. And that points to the other element of that trove of content as sort of like how to surface it to users because there's so much being created. How do you get it in front of the eyes of our members?
Luke Waltzer: These are really exciting conversations for us to have. And I don’t know if Matt feels this way, but I feel like I just kind of pick my head up and it’s been 10 years-

Matthew Gold: Yeah.

Luke Waltzer: ... that we’ve been working on this platform. And that’s exciting and it’s exciting to think about what things might look like in another 10 years, and to think about those horizons. How do we keep the platform not only functional and stable, and responsive to our users, and ethically engaged with their data? But what is this kind of technology going to need to do in 10 years, and how do we start preparing for that in ways that we couldn’t have anticipated 10 years ago when we just started this project on a shoestring budget, and had no idea what kind of life span it would have.

Luke Waltzer: We feel like it’s pretty stable now and it’s going to be sustainable, and that these conversations about the horizon are really exciting and invigorating ones for us to have with our colleagues, and with all of the new users on the Commons. So we’re looking forward to another exciting 10 years.

Tanya Domi: I want to congratulate both of you and the Commons team that supports this incredible platform. And thank you for coming in today, and we will have you back to talk about more exciting developments.

Matthew Gold: Thank you so much for having us.


Tanya Domi: Thanks for tuning into the Thought Project and thanks to today’s guest, Professor Matt Gold and Professor Luke Waltzer of the Graduate Center CUNY. The Thought Project is brought to you with production, engineering, and technical assistance by Kevin Wolf of CUNY TV. I’m Tanya Domi. Tune in next week.