

In the Classroom 54

Using Hypothesis for Social Annotation

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Stan Skrabut: Thanks for taking time to listen to this podcast. This certainly means a lot. I know you could be doing other things, but you're hanging out with me and I really appreciate it. Today is one of those cold gray days in western New York, a little bit of snow going on. I've been spending the morning checking out this program called the Hypothesis. I think it's the tool that you're really going to like.

Hypothesis is a social annotation tool. This means you can mark up web pages, PDF documents, EPUBs. You can mark them up where the annotations that you make can be public, or they can be private, they can just be for you, or you can also make them part of a group. You can create something maybe for your class or for a committee you're on as you're looking at documents and you can have a private group and you can make these annotations as you're looking at these various documents and it can be part of a class exercise. This is pretty cool. I've been playing with this all morning and I think it's got a lot of great potential. It's really easy to use. Let's just get started kind of exploring this.

Why would you use Hypothesis? Well, basically, it's like Marginalia, that in your book you're writing in the margins, you're underlining things, you're making notes to yourself in your book. This is a powerful way to have a dialogue with the content, with the author, allows you to have part of that dialogue. But a tool like Hypothesis brings it to a whole new level where you can have this conversation out in public and have other people reacting to what you're saying related to that very specific piece of text that you highlighted in a document.

As I mentioned, these annotations can be public or private or part of a group or private group, which I think is quite powerful. You can do this as part of a class. This allows you to go in and dissect an article, say, as a class exercise, and have students annotated to improve their comprehension, develop their critical thinking around those course materials. When you're tying this into open education resource documents, I think it's just absolutely huge what the potential is for your class. The nice thing about it is that with these private groups, if you had multiple sections of a group, you could create a group for each section, and they can mark up the same document. And then you can just select between the different groups to see how what they emphasize as part of their understanding of the text. I think this is absolutely great.

I also think there's a lot of importance to the public annotations, where you can look at research and see what other people are thinking about a specific research or other documents that are available just to have that dialogue with others around that text. It allows us to extend that conversation and so there's a lot of potential on what it can do. Using Hypothesis is tremendously easy. Pretty much without guidance, I was able

to kind of figure out how to use it. But I would still recommend checking out the guides, and the tutorials, which I'm going to put all into the show notes so you can go to check out the show notes. This is episode ITC 54. Go check them out and you'll be able to see how you can really put this to use part of those show notes.

The first thing that you have to do is you have to go to Hypothesis to create an account, and I put a link into the show notes. The next thing you need to do is if you're using a Chrome browser, you need to put the extension in your Chrome browser, or if you're using another browser, then you would use the bookmarklet. It's a matter of going to a particular web page, doesn't matter. Go to a web page, turn on the Hypothesis just by clicking on it. If people have already made some annotations, you're going to see a number and tell you how many annotations. You may have to turn that on in your settings. Once it's on, you can go to webpage and see how many annotations have already been there and you extend the panel on the side, there's a little arrow that will extend out and show you what the annotations are.

As you're looking at the document, if someone annotated something, it'll basically be highlighted. You can click on the highlight, and it will show you that specific annotation. Or as I mentioned, you can look at all the annotations for the whole document through that panel. If you want to annotate something, you simply highlight a line of text within that document and a little tool will pop-up with quotation marks and you click on that tool and then you can type away and indicate what you want to say about that particular sentence or phrase. As part of it, you have option. When you're saving it, you can save it either to public or to yourself, public or private. At the very top, it'll say "public" and if you hit the down arrow on that, you have the option to create a group. You can have multiple groups that you can be part of and depending on why you're reviewing this can be related to a specific group. And so for classes, you can create those different groups.

Once you decide how you want to save it, you save it and you're basically done. If you come back to that page, those annotations will be there for you. Other things that you can do with annotations, you can add tags. Tags are useful. As far as doing searches, you can do searches for specific tags. Prior to when they created groups, one of the strategies was to create a tag for your class name, and it's still probably a good idea. And then you can select that class, do a search on that class name for that particular tag and see all the annotations that were made for that particular class. I would still recommend using those tags in that way, but you can also use tags for other organizations, other taxonomy that you're going to apply to that particular article, or to the things that you're annotating. You can also add in your annotations, links and images, and videos. There has to be a link where that exists already on the web, it's not something that you can upload and install. You have to keep that in mind.

There is a capability of changing annotations from public to private and private to public. It's basically going back to the annotation you made and click on the Edit button, that little pencil button and then you can just decide whether how you're going to say the public or private or if you're in a group, whether to the group to private, entirely up to you. Once you create a group, the group moderator or the group owner is the one that can invite others to that particular group, or if you're happened to be a member of a group, you can invite others to the group. There's a unique link for those different

groups where you can go and see what annotations they've made to all the different documents that they are looking at. You'll be able to see that by going to the specific group page. But then, it's just a matter of joining a group. I joined one group, as I was doing my research, they invited me to join a group. So I did and I was able to see the different things that they were working on and the comments that they made.

As I mentioned, groups can be very powerful for kind of working on the same text with different audiences. Say that you're teaching a spring 2020 course and you have this document that you're going to focus on in class and you can do annotations to the class, but next year, when you come to it, you don't want all these public annotations on it, you want to create a separate group. By just starting out with a group, spring 2020 group, you can annotate the text and then when you get ready for your spring 2021 group, they can have a different group and you can then go and annotate the text from there.

One of the other nice things about annotations when you're doing the annotation is you have the capability of replying to someone else. You can create this threaded discussion by just clicking on the Reply button and responding to what somebody has said. I think that's also quite useful, especially in a classroom or a committee-type environment. You can also, which I thought was really great is, annotate local PDF documents. If you are pulling down research, you've got a bunch of PDF documents, you can go ahead and make annotations with Hypothesis for those specific documents.

Now, you have to make some adjustments in your browser, that's what I found out I had to do. Basically, I have to give my browser permission to annotate local files, and it's really easy to do. You open up your web browser, you have Hypothesis there, open up a new tab and you basically drag your PDF document and drop it into the browser and it'll come up in its own window. By activating Hypothesis, then you can start making annotation. Now, I was curious if I would lose those annotations. But basically, I closed down my browser, brought it back up, took that same document, dropped it in there, turned on the Hypothesis and the annotations I made were still there, which I thought was just wonderful.

There's a lot of different ways that you can go and explore for annotations, you can do searches, you can look at-- So you bring a document up and you see who's annotating a document. You can click on the individual's username and it will show all the different annotations that they have made not only in that document, but all the other documents that they have that are available publicly. You can do that with your own name and see what different documents that you have annotated. Also, you can do searches based on tags, you- -can searches are in URLs and by putting in a URL you can do a search for all the different documents. This would be useful if you have an open-access journal for example and you wanted to see what kind of annotations were across all the different journal articles. So, this would allow you to do this. So, what do you do with Hypothesis? Well, you probably already have a glimpse in to some other ideas that you can do a lot with Hypothesis but there was an article out there that gave me a lot of wonderful ideas written by Jeremy Dean and the article is *Back to School with Annotation: 10 Ways to Annotate with Students*.

Some of these ideas came from that particular article, some from other resources, but one of the basic levels and I've repeated this over and over is you can collectively review documents. So, if you're part of a committee, you can ask them to review the document and make comments in the document, highlight different parts so everybody on the committee can look at this. What you could do is, you could take a document that you have, close to finalized, turn it into a PDF document, make it available on the web that they can look at and then have the committee go forth and add their annotations to it.

Also, if you happen to do open education resources, for example, that you're using Pressbooks, there is a plugin for Hypothesis that you can have that annotation tool available for everyone and as part of your open resources where they can make annotations related to the materials that you're sharing. For educators, if you are a teacher, you can take a document and put some prompts throughout the document that you want students to reply to. So, you may want to point out different difficult vocabulary words, you may want to add questions, highlight phrases, ask questions that you want them to respond to. A lot of different ways that you can do that during teacher annotations.

For students, one great way is to do a glossary. Take and look up these words, these unknown words, words you're unsure of and go ahead and basically annotate them. Put definitions or explanations on what that particular word means right there in the text. If you're doing this across multiple classes, this can expand pretty rapidly. So, it is kind of a powerful tool in that way. You can also have students identify pinch points. Areas where they're just not sure and they can highlight an area that's giving them confusion. Basically, a pinch point and make an annotation indicating that they're just not sure what that means and that gives you a clue that you can go back and help them and finish out the annotation.

Just kind of a quick way that you can highlight areas where students are having difficulty if they can just mark those using Hypothesis. Being able to analyze text, doing rhetorical analysis. They may go through and if you're using strategies like ethos, pathos and logos, you can go in there and mark up the text for each of those different strategies through the document. Then, they may go and they could use tags for that and then they could also give explanation on why they chose something. Being able to write their opinions. What do they think? What are they thinking and feeling and being able to annotate that into the document.

Creating an annotated bibliography, this is more in personal research. That they're going out there and looking at various documents and making those annotations that they can pull together later to form their papers. Using it for a kind of analysis by groups. Right, so you can look at a document through the frame of different groups, maybe you're looking at something maybe a current events document, and it's a Political Science course, so how would the Democrats look at this? How would the Republicans, Liberals, Conservatives, the Libertarians, what would they be thinking as they're reviewing maybe a document that just came out or a certain bill or something like that.

Have them break up into groups and approach it using that frame of reference. So, lots of different ways that you can do this. Current events, to springing out current events and students share their opinions on it. There is a way that you can create a stream of information based on a tag. So, I mentioned having a class tag. I could create one for a class that I have from the University of Wyoming. So, uwitech5350spring2020, I could use that as a tag that I want to use and then there's a way to create a stream based on the tag and I will once again throw that in the show notes. You can bookmark that into your class and so you can click on it and see what kind of information is passing by based on what the students, everybody is annotating for that particular document.

Then finally, you can share pages that you want students to annotate. So the different ways of doing it, you can have them load the tool, the Hypothesis tool or there is a way in the document itself that you can share and have a link that's individuals can go and add their comments to it. So, I think this is a really powerful tool. It's just about increasing the dialogue, it's a synchronized way of course but allows you to kind of examine a dialogue, add to the conversation, get to see and hear what other people are saying.

I think it's quite useful. Very easy to use. I had it up and running and I was playing with it all morning and I am going to continue my exploration of this. I have a class that's starting so we may be experimenting with it. So, that is what I have for you right now and before I let you go, here's a plug for my book.