

Impact Round-Up 6th September: Monsters of EdTech, visualising conferences, and for-profit masters.

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Managing Editor [Sierra Williams](#) presents a round-up of popular stories from around the web on higher education, academic impact, and trends in scholarly communication.

Conference season is in full swing and this week there were a range of events taking place on scholarly communications with equally lively discussions taking place on Twitter. The [Association for Learning Technology's annual conference](#) (#altc) discussed online and digital innovations in higher education as well as advances in research and collaboration. Notable events were the excellent keynotes from Catherine Cronin ([storify](#)) and Audrey Watters ([video](#), [notes and slides](#)). Watters' talk was titled [Ed-Tech's Monsters](#) and focused on the stories we tell ourselves about technology masterfully weaving together the work of Bruno Latour, Thomas Pynchon, Mary Shelley, and Alan Turing. She ended her talk with a beautiful quote from Hannah Arendt:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. [[read more](#)]



Image credit: [Audrey Watters, Ed Tech's Monster's](#) CC BY-SA

The presentation notes and slides provided by Watters are [highly recommended](#). Another conference of note this

week was the 19th International Conference on Science and Technology Indicators (#sti14) discussing Pathways to Master Big and Little Data. The [full proceedings are available to download](#), but do note the proceedings are 742 pages. Citation impact and research evaluation were central themes and the social sciences and the humanities in particular were discussed in detail. Peter Kraker blogged about his paper ahead of the conference on [Visualizing the evolution of a scientific conference with altmetrics](#).

Speaking of tweets, Bonnie Stewart finds there [something is rotten in the state of...Twitter](#):

...in academia, with Twitter finally on the radar of major institutions, and universities issuing social media policies and playing damage control over faculty tweets with [the Salaita firing](#) and even more recent, deeply disturbing rumours of institutional interventions in employee's lives, this takeover threatens to choke a messy but powerful set of scholarly practices and approaches it never really got around to understanding. The threat of being summarily acted upon by the academy as a consequence of tweets – always present, frankly, particularly for untenured and more vulnerable members of the academic community – now hangs visibly over all heads...even while the medium is still scorned as scholarship by many. [\[read more\]](#)



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In the [London Review of Books](#) this week is a powerful take on the marketisation of higher education by Marina Warner, former Professor in the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies at the University of Essex. She writes,

What is happening at Essex reflects on the one hand the general distortions required to turn a university into a for-profit business – one advantageous to administrators and punitive to teachers and scholars – and on the other reveals a particular, local interpretation of the national policy. The Senate and councils of a university like Essex, and most of the academics who are elected by colleagues to govern, have been caught unawares by their new masters, their methods and their assertion of power. Perhaps they/we are culpable of doziness. But there is a central contradiction in

the government's business model for higher education: you can't inspire the citizenry, open their eyes and ears, achieve international standing, fill the intellectual granary of the country and replenish it, attract students from this country and beyond, keep up the reputation of the universities, expect your educators and scholars to be public citizens and serve on all kinds of bodies, if you pin them down to one-size-fits-all contracts, inflexible timetables, overflowing workloads, overcrowded classes. [[read more](#)]

Over at [Vox.com](#), Ezra Klein looks at [How political science conquered Washington](#) (good news I'm sure for our sister blog, [USAPP](#)). Klein looks at the rise of the political science blogosphere:

poli-sci blogs have let political scientists speak for themselves. But that's only benefitted political science because what they've said has been worth listening to...Political scientists traffic in structural explanations for American politics...As politicians lose power and parties gain power, these structural explanations for American politics have become more important. [[read more](#)]

And our final recommendation is on the case for humanities over STEM education to boost innovation in economies. In [Teaching Economic Dynamism](#), Nobel laureate in economics, Edmund S. Phelps argues

...students must be exposed to – and learn to appreciate – the modern values associated with individualism, which emerged toward the end of the Renaissance and continued to gain traction through the early twentieth century. Just as these values fueled dynamism in the past, they can reinvigorate economies today...A necessary first step is to restore the humanities in high school and university curricula. [[Read more](#)]

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [Comments Policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

About the Author

Sierra Williams is Managing Editor of the LSE Impact of Social Sciences blog. Her interests are in open scholarship, use of research in the third sector, the role of expertise in society, and data sharing in the social sciences.

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