Weller, Martin. "The Medals of Our Defeats." *The Digital Scholar: How Technology Is Transforming Scholarly Practice*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 154–167. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849666275.ch-013>>.

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13 The Medals of Our Defeats

My argument thus far in this book has been to set out how a digital, networked, open approach *can* change scholarship. I have attempted to demonstrate that it offers alternatives to a previously limited set of options which were often created to meet the needs of physical requirements, be it the pedagogy we use to teach, the way in which we meet to share knowledge at conferences or the form of knowledge dissemination we adopt in publishing. I may not have portrayed the adoption of technology as an unalloyed force for good in scholarship, but it has largely been an argument based on the potential positive impacts. In this chapter then I want to counter this and explore some of the potential negative effects of technology because as we adopt new practices we may well find others being abandoned, and we should be aware what the cost of this is to our practice overall. I would contend that the benefits will outweigh the negatives, but just as we can't know what those benefits are if we don't engage with technology, so will we be unaware of what we lose if we do not apply our critical faculties to technology adoption.

Avoiding extremism

The use of technology seems to divide people into strong pro- and anti-camps or perhaps utopian and dystopian perspectives. Lessig (2007) points out that such an extremist divide is occurring with regard to intellectual property, on both sides, as the law intersects with the digital remix culture. On one side there are the copyright owners who will prosecute any misuse or, as with YouTube, enforce a takedown of any copyrighted material regardless of fair use. This is the type of response I categorised as a 'scarcity response' in Chapter 8. But, as harmful, Lessig suggests, are the other extremists, who reject all notions of copyright and intellectual ownership. Similar extremism can be seen with the use of technology, in society in general and in education in particular. The pro-camp will make some of the more outlandish claims we saw in Chapter 2, about the imminent revolution, the irrelevancy of higher education and the radically different net generation. The anti-technology camp will decry that it destroys social values, undermines proper scholarly practice, is always superficial and is even damaging our brains. Lessig seeks a balance between the intellectual property extremes, and a similar balance can be sought between the pro- and anti-technology camps. The remainder of this chapter will examine some of the anti-technology charges in more detail, some of which have more substance than others.

Superficiality

Nicholas Carr's (2008) article 'Is Google Making Us Stupid?' struck a chord with many people. Carr's (2010) argument, which he fleshes out in his book *The Shallows*, is that our continual use of the net induces a superficiality to our behaviour. He says this is felt particularly when trying to read a complex piece:

Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do.

Carr cites the British Library's Google Generation study (Rowlands *et al.* 2008) as evidence that people are losing the ability to read deeply, and when they are online they tend to skim, jumping from one site to another. The pervasiveness of the Internet means that this behaviour is then carried over into other, offline activity.

The reason Carr's article resonated with people was that many have intuitively begun to suspect this of themselves. On a less significant level than deep reading, I know that, for instance, I cease trying to remember small pieces of information: people's telephone numbers being a good example. As a child it was a point of honour to be able to recite the numbers of most friends and family from memory. Now I'm lucky if I can remember my own number. This is partly a result of changing practice; one doesn't type the number in any more but dials from a contact list, and so the learning by rote that occurred previously has diminished, but it is also a form of cognitive economy – I don't *need* to remember those numbers because I always have them in a list somewhere. Similarly, I don't need to remember an exact article or book reference because as long as I have enough salient pieces of information, Google will find it for me. I am effectively outsourcing some of that mundane memory to Google.

The real question is 'does this matter?' Is remembering small, precise pieces of information a kind of intellectual morning stretching routine? It isn't difficult and won't make you super-fit, but it has long-term benefits. Or are we just being practical, not wasting time remembering the rote information, which frees us up to engage in more creative pursuits? When Clay Shirky (2010) talks of cognitive surplus he is referring to it at a societal level, but maybe it operates at an individual level also; now that we don't have to waste mental capacity remembering what film a certain actor was in (because we have instant access to imdb.com) we are free to think how the narrative might have been better conveyed in that scene.

The answer is that we don't know which of these two is correct, and I suspect neither of them is, as they both suggest a rather simplistic mental model.

Carr's charge that superficiality bleeds over into other activities such as deep reading and analysis is a serious one for scholarship, which is almost entirely constituted of such activity. In this view engagement with technology is not just a distraction, or another pressure on an overloaded academic, but is positively dangerous. It becomes something akin to a virus, infecting the key critical engagement skills required for scholarship to function.

There may be some evidence that this occurs online. Wijekumar *et al.* (2006) reported that this skittish 'bouncing' behaviour was exhibited by students with more computer experience, resulting in poorer performance when they needed to engage in an academic task. They concluded that the students were transferring negative affordances from their prior experience, when they may have been playing a game, while indulging in instant chat and reading email:

[T]he students who had used computers for a long time tended to have multiple windows open on their desktop and then believed they were not affected by the multi-tasking. The results of their recall showed that their synthesis of the chat room was actually disjointed and quite incomplete. (Wijekumar *et al.* 2006)

What we don't know is the extent to which this is transferred offline. Carr makes a strong correlation between deep reading and deep thinking. One might suppose that if the type of behaviour he indicates was strongly manifested in society then we would see a decline in book sales because people would not find them useful or they didn't suit their new found behaviour. The opposite is true, however, with book sales increasing from \$24 billion to \$37 billion over 2000–2008 and internet sales being a main driver of this (Brynjolfsson, Hu and Smith 2010). Of course, we don't know that people are reading, or indeed engaging in 'deep reading' of these books, but the figures do at least suggest that reading is not an activity in decline.

What is also not clear is if people are engaging in new types of activity that replace the function of deep reading. For instance, if someone is writing a blog post they may be gathering several articles together to construct an argument. Similarly, is a student who creates a video mashup from images, video, text and music to make an argument learning less than one who writes an essay? The answer is that at the moment it is probably too early to know, but we should note Carr's caution about superficiality for now.

Quality

Much of the success of Web 2.0 has been driven by its simplicity. This has seen a mass democratisation of expression, as anyone can now create a blog, or share

a video or a photo. This has led to innovation and inventiveness which would not have arisen through conventional broadcast channels. However, it has also given rise to an unprecedented amount of what we might charitably label 'ephemera'. This shift in filtering from pre- to post-dissemination raises a key issue for scholars: How do they maintain and judge quality in a world where everyone is a broadcaster or publisher?

Some of these issues were addressed in Chapter 12 on publishing. One response is to resist any such shift and to retain the peer-review model, which has served scholars very well. This is a viable approach, but even then, as PLoS have demonstrated, there are different models that may be explored.

The issue of quality is perhaps more keenly felt when we consider teaching. I raised the idea of pedagogy of abundance in Chapter 8, and in such a pedagogy the content will vary greatly in terms of quality. In *The Cult of the Amateur*, Andrew Keen (2007) argues that such abundance does not produce high-quality, merely an outpouring of low-quality, content: 'instead of creating masterpieces, these millions and millions of exuberant monkeys – many with no more talent than our primate cousins – are creating an endless digital forest of mediocrity.' If you compare any random piece of Web 2.0 content with that produced by a professional, this is likely to be true. But the question is not whether some people produce poor quality content, obviously they do and the majority in fact, but whether *as a whole* this system can produce high-quality content.

Keen argues that it does not, and it may be that we are making false comparisons. It is not whether a YouTube clip is as good as a professional television show or movie but rather whether it is a good YouTube clip that is important. These often trade off high production quality for inventiveness. A blog post may not be the equivalent of the inside story of investigative journalism, but because it is free from constraints of readership, word length or deadlines, the blog post may provide more thoughtful and detailed analysis of the subject than is found in the mainstream media.

From a scholarly perspective then, quality will depend on the purpose. As I proposed in Chapter 9 when looking at open educational resources (OERs), there is an implicit message within different types of content. High-quality content, such as professionally produced teaching or research material, suggests authority. Students will have one set of behaviours associated with this, for example, reading, dissecting and summarising. Low-quality, individual items, however, because of their obvious ease of production, can be seen as an invitation to participate. Therefore if the intention is to encourage engagement then low-quality routes may be more fruitful than seeking to produce professional broadcast material. Around a research project then one might imagine a range of different types of output, all realising different functions.

Keen's fear is that the cult of the amateur drives out the professional, that there is no room for newspapers if everyone reads blogs and that society will be the poorer. This is beyond the scope of this book, but in terms of education, the range of content can be beneficial, since 'amateurs' often create content which addresses subjects that academics may not and also in a manner which differs from traditional teaching.

For learners the issue becomes one of assessing the quality and appropriateness of resources. The role of education here seems vital, in both providing the critical framework for evaluating and assessing content and also in demonstrating how such content can be used to develop deep understanding of a topic.

Brain damage

Carr makes reference to the Internet changing our cognitive capacity, that it is rewiring our brains. In one sense, this is a facile truism; any time you learn anything your brain is 'rewired' at a synaptic level. If you remember anything from this book, it will have rewired your brain, but you probably won't need to worry about it. There is a trend, however, to promote this rewiring to a grander scale, to suggest it is some kind of evolutionary change. Susan Greenfield is fond of making pronouncements of this nature, for example, that "these technologies are infantilising the brain into the state of small children who are attracted by buzzing noises and bright lights, who have a small attention span and who live for the moment" and even 'we do not know whether the current increase in autism is due more to increased awareness and diagnosis of autism, or whether it can – if there is a true increase – be in any way linked to an increased prevalence among people of spending time in screen relationships' (Derbyshire 2009).

These arguments seem both vague and ill-founded. The suggestion is that because the brain rewires itself (what is termed 'brain plasticity') it can therefore be influenced by the amount of time spent playing games, being online and so on (although the activities are rarely differentiated and often grouped together as 'screen time'). This is as true of playing a computer game as it is of riding a bicycle or writing a book. It is the subsequent conclusion that it is necessarily harmful that lacks evidence and, as with the quotes above, is based on supposition and anecdote. Brain plasticity is also, surely, an antidote to these concerns, since if an individual's brain has been rewired by one set of behaviour, it can be rewired again. The intention of referring to brain circuitry seems to be to instigate fear. As neuroscientist Joshua Greene puts it, 'the Internet hasn't changed the way we think anymore than the microwave oven has changed the way we digest food. The Internet has provided us with unprecedented access to information, but it hasn't changed what we do with it once it's made it into our heads' (Gerschenfeld 2010).

Whether there are social and behavioural impacts of operating online is a serious question, however. Just as the television had serious social impacts, we must accept that computers and Internet will also have consequences. These will undoubtedly be a mixture of positive and negative, but I would argue that using pseudo-scientific explanations to back up prejudices will not help us address these issues.

Forgetting and identity

One such serious issue relates to online identity, particularly for young people. There have been numerous stories about people losing their jobs because they have posted injudicious content online. Sometimes this seems justified, and at other times, an overreaction. For instance, most of us would sympathise with teacher Ashley Payne who was dismissed from her job when she posted photographs of herself on her vacation holding a glass of wine to her private Facebook account and was reported to her principal. But maybe it is less clear in other cases, for example, the Labour MP Stewart MacLennan who was sacked after referring to David Cameron and Nick Clegg in rather unsavoury terms on Twitter.

What such cases demonstrate is that the boundary between personal and professional life is increasingly blurred, and what may seem like a joke between friends has the potential to be taken out of context and, with a global distribution, suddenly transmitted everywhere. When 22-year-old student Connor Riley was offered an internship at Cisco, she tweeted 'Cisco just offered me a job! Now I have to weigh the utility of a fatty paycheck against the daily commute to San Jose and hating the work'. A Cisco employee picked it up, and something of a witch-hunt ensued as the message was shared as an example of how to lose a job (she had in fact already declined the internship). A more recent, and sinister, case is that of Paul Chambers, who, because of airport closures, was unable to fly to see his girlfriend. He tweeted 'Crap! Robin Hood airport is closed. You've got a week and a bit to get your shit together otherwise I'm blowing the airport sky high!!' This message saw him prosecuted and fined using an obscure telephony law, which resulted in him losing his job twice.

Both of these cases demonstrate the strained boundary between public communication systems and social chat. For young people who now grow up using such media, the possibility of leaving a trace of some indiscretion increases due to the time they spend in such environments and because so much of their social life is conducted there. If it is not to have a damaging effect on their lives, they need to learn techniques of handling their online identities early on and, equally, society at large needs to learn to view these in the proper light.

In his book *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* Mayer-Schonberger (2009) argues that forgetting is an important psychological process. It allows us to

construct new versions of our identity, which are suited to different contexts and different ages. With a digital, networked and open online memory, however, this is becoming increasingly difficult. As well as leading to the types of problems of misinterpretation and heavy-handed responses listed above, it may also affect our own personal development. We cannot shake off the memory of the inconsiderate adolescent we once were so easily because its record is always there. He proposes that internet communications have a shelf life, that they should be allowed to expire unless the individual takes specific action to preserve them.

For educators there are two main issues; the first is the extent to which they help students manage their online identity, and the second is how they manage their own boundary between personal and professional life. There are a range of options available from complete withdrawal from online life to using pseudonyms to speak openly. Knowledge of the type of information that can be gathered about you and how that might be used is important, but if it comes at the cost of a sterile online exchange where people become scared to say anything beyond a form of corporate message, then that would be a price too high for many. So developing an appropriate online persona and voice is an important skill as our digital footprint expands. As is developing a good relationship with your employer one suspects.

It is not just young people who may have behaved foolish, who need to forget or at least remould their past. Scholars make judgements, suggestions and proposals all the time. An open approach inevitably results in more such pronouncements, as scholarly output is not restricted to just conference papers and journal articles. An increase in both quantity and type of outputs (which may include casual conversations, jokes, half-thought-out ideas etc.) must increase the possibility of being wrong. Most scholars will revise their positions based on new evidence or changing circumstances. Scholarship is closely bound with authority; the opinions of scholars count because they are deemed as being an authority in this area. Will a digital audit trail reveal contradictions, which undermine current authority?

I know that I have shifted position with regard to technology over the years. In 2004 I was an advocate of LMSs, but subsequently I have become a critic of the manner in which they stifle innovation. In 2008 I wrote a (not entirely serious) blog post suggesting that you 'Google up your life' (Weller 2008). I am certainly more wary of some of the issues around cloud computing now and would be unlikely to write such a post today (although I still find the Google suite of tools superior to those offered in-house by my university).

Do such modifications to opinion undermine the authority of this book? Or are they part of a natural progression as someone develops an argument in response to changing contexts? If so, is this a subtlety that everyone can appreciate? Does the process of ongoing engagement and openness create a different type of authority?

I will leave you to determine your own responses to these questions, but I would suggest that perfect digital memory is not just an issue for teenagers with hangovers.

Next-big-thingism

If failing to engage with technology is one problem, then over-eager adoption of every new technology is another. One of the effects of a digital, open, networked culture is that it amplifies success. The network effect sees some very big winners, as a piece of content goes ‘viral’. Suddenly a YouTube clip of a child on the way back from the dentist has 75 million views (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txqjwrbYGrs>). As argued in Chapter 7, these big successes are a distraction, however; they are outliers, freaks – they are not the norm. The norm is a hundred hits or so. Similarly some projects achieve great success, and the obvious approach is to emulate them. Wikipedia is such an oft-quoted example of how crowdsourcing can be successful that it is a cliché. That Wikipedia works *is* amazing, but that doesn't mean the same approach will work for every project. Similarly, Twitter may be an excellent means of expanding a professional network, but forcing students to use it may be seen as irrelevant.

As we saw in Chapter 2, it is something of a myth that a digital generation of students is clamouring for these new technologies in their education. Cann and Badge (2010) created a course on developing a personal learning environment using a variety of tools. The module was not popular with students and seen as a distraction, for example, one student commenting, ‘I didn't feel this course was necessary in my degree course; it took up a lot of my time. Time which I feel would have been better spent doing work more related to my degree, such as practical reports and essays’. However, the next iteration of their course which focused on using Friendfeed to act as a form of social eportfolio met with more success, indicating that the choice of tools and the perceived relevance to the main area of study are crucial elements.

The over-adoption of tools can lead to what has been termed ‘creepy tree house’ syndrome (Stein 2008) when authority is seen to try and invade a young person's social space. There is strong resistance from students to universities and lecturers making formal use of social networks as this is seen as an invasion of their social space (e.g. Madge *et al.* 2009). When parents and professors start inhabiting these spaces it creates a role conflict (Selwyn 2009) for students, as they struggle to know which face to present and find their communication stifled. These tools may have significant potential for learning, but students don't want them to become the next LMS: organisationally controlled, bland and singular in focus (i.e. teaching). For the teaching function of scholarship then the question is ‘How can educators utilise the potential of these tools without destroying what makes them valuable to students?’

The answer is one that doesn't always sit well with educators and students, particularly when students face rising costs for their education, which in turn alters the educator–student relationship to a more supplier–customer oriented one. But, nevertheless, the answer is: *by making mistakes*. Undoubtedly wikis will be unedited, community forums silent, crowdsourced database projects empty, but each iteration will generate improvement and insight as to what works effectively.

Fortunately the investment is not high with many technologies, both in terms of finance and time taken to use them, so this iteration can occur rapidly. It may seem unprofessional to 'experiment' with a student's education, but as long as there is a sound basis for exploring the new approaches, and flexibility on the part of the educator, then the damage is limited. Erik Duval (2010) argues that we should be less cautious and that we can afford to disrupt education, largely because the existing systems are far from perfect anyway. An argument can also be made that exposure to new approaches and critical analysis of these are of benefit across all disciplines of study, and it is more harmful to create a sterile, artificial environment for students which will not be replicated as they continue to learn throughout their lives.

It is also the case that experience is required to appreciate what tools and approaches are suitable. Crowdsourcing, for example, works well for particular problems, often when there is a simple contribution to make, which can be aggregated to produce an overall answer. It is not good at producing singular works of creativity or genius, where individuals fare better. It also requires a reasonable mass of contributions to work, a motivation for those contributions and an easy means to contribute. So crowdsourcing an essay probably won't be successful, but getting students to create a set of links to useful resources via social bookmarking might be, particularly over several presentations of a course. And the latter might work better if it builds on a tool that students are already using rather than requiring them to adopt a different one. Knowing which approach to try, and then which tool to use to implement it, is something that workshops, training courses and examples can help with, but it arises much more from experience and experimentation.

In his essay on Churchill, Christopher Hitchens (2002) complains that 'Churchill was allowed by events to flaunt the medals of his defeats'. Churchill's defeats had costly consequences; however, our experiments with technology do not, but defeats will be inevitable.

Property and ownership

Like many people I am somewhat conflicted over cloud computing. On the one hand, being able to share and store content in the ubiquitous cloud has been a great benefit, and many of the tools that allow me to do this possess a vibrancy and

ease of use that is sadly lacking in bespoke academic tools. But, at the same time, I am conscious of surrendering more of my ideas, content and identity to companies who make use of my data for their own ends. We can view this anxiety from an individual and broader perspective.

For the individual an oft-voiced concern is that of intellectual property and ownership when adopting an open approach. Creative Commons licences go some way to addressing these, but a bigger concern may be that scholars feel under pressure to release data, ideas or results because of a culture of openness, which are then taken by others and exploited. I suspect the fear of this is disproportionate to the reality for most areas of study; it is only in the highly commercial fields that it is likely to be the case, such as medicine (and even then, there is a strong argument for adopting an open source model of drug development). Indeed openness can be its own defence, since content stolen and unattributed is more likely to be recognised (particularly if the 'thief' places their content online).

But undoubtedly an open approach makes these issues more likely, and the boundaries of fair use become blurred. Like many bloggers I have found my content appearing in unusual places, sometimes unattributed. For example, I recently found a feed of my blog being used as the 'Blog' link on a commercial software site. The post linked back to my site, but there was no explicit attribution, or context provided, nor was permission requested. This would seem to stretch the Creative Commons licence I use on my blog – does a link count as attribution? Does this constitute commercial use? I emailed the company involved, but didn't receive a response. This mild misuse didn't cost me anything, but one could argue that it could be damaging to reputation if you were interpreted as endorsing a product. Obviously this situation could not have arisen if I didn't keep a blog, or kept it private, or maybe even if I used a very traditional copyright notice. The question I had to answer then was whether keeping a public blog with an open licence brings me more benefit overall than the potential damage which might arise. So far, my experience has come down strongly in favour of the benefits, but balancing this equation will vary for individuals.

Perhaps more significant is the potential cost of adopting cloud-based solutions not for individuals but to scholars as a whole. At the time of writing, the Wikileaks release of US diplomatic cables is causing considerable controversy. What this has revealed is the extent to which many cloud services have embedded themselves within the fabric of our society. For example, Wikileaks was hosted by Amazon, who removed this service, seemingly under pressure from a US senator. MacKinnon (2010) points out that 'a substantial if not critical amount of our political discourse has moved into the digital realm. This realm is largely made up of virtual spaces that are created, owned and operated by the private sector'.

Scholars have a long tradition of holding governments to account and questioning policy, so could a shift to cloud computing put this in jeopardy? Even if it is not political, the Wikileaks episode has highlighted the dangers of relying on the cloud to host all scholarly discourse. As John Naughton (2010) puts it, 'For years people have extolled cloud computing as the way of the future. The lesson of the last week is simple: be careful what you wish for.'

Sustainability

For Web 2.0 critics like Keen (2007) the issue is not just that the democratisation of publishing creates low-quality content but that it undermines the business practice of established industries, as I examined in Chapter 2. This may be the case; the changes we are seeing in content industries are still relatively new. Lanier (2010) similarly suggests that the open content movement will ultimately harm creativity. He reports that he failed to find any significant number of musicians who were making a living using the 'new economy' models. When people download pirated content he argues that '[t]he problem in each case is not that you stole from a specific person but that you undermined the artificial scarcities that allow the economy to function. In the same way, creative expression on the internet will benefit from a social contract that imposes a modest degree of artificial scarcity on information' (Lanier 2010).

The argument from sustainability then can be summarised as 'who pays?' The focus of this book is scholarship, and despite the analogies that can be drawn with other sectors such as newspapers, music and film, there are also significant differences. What will work in those sectors may not work in academia, and conversely, what is disastrous for them may not be for scholars. Piracy, for instance, is less of an issue when it comes to scholarship, for two very significant reasons: revenue does not flow directly from this content, and content forms only a part of the overall offering. In terms of research, money comes from research councils, industry, professional bodies, government agencies, charities and the scholar's own institution. This is not to suggest that these funding sources are not facing pressure, but piracy, or free open dissemination, is not a factor that undermines this model. Indeed the opposite would seem to be the case, in that most funders will want the findings of the research disseminated, shared, downloaded, reused and copied as many times as possible (provided it is acknowledged and isn't commercially sensitive).

The situation is a little more complex with teaching. If a university releases all of its teaching content as OERs, will that result in fewer students? From the OER projects that have been initiated so far the answer seems to be no, and it may even attract students. What is unclear is if this is a temporary effect – if every university

and college released *all* of their teaching content, would we witness a decline in student numbers? What OERs highlight is that education is, of course, about more than content, as I explored in Chapter 3. Accreditation, support, structure and expertise are all valuable elements which are difficult (but maybe not impossible) to disaggregate.

Sustainability is an issue for the OER movement, but as argued in Chapter 7, much of what scholars currently do can be realised as open, digital outputs with relatively little cost. We are also blind to many of the costs that operate in our current system because we have not had alternatives to realising them previously.

So while the open content movement may well have profound implications for the survivability of other sectors, this is not the case with scholarship. Most revenue relating to scholarship does not arise directly from selling content. Scholars are thus in a better position to explore the possibilities of an open approach because they are protected to a degree from the financial implications, and in fact their relevance and value to learners, society and research funders can be increased by such an approach. These differences with other sectors, and the implications for experimenting in higher education, are explored in more detail in Chapter 14.

Conclusion

Of the objections, or reservations, covered in this chapter, I would suggest the following as the most challenging for digital scholarship:

- Moving beyond the superficial – many successful Web 2.0 services essentially allow a very simple function, for example, sharing a photograph. Can we use the same techniques for deeper, more difficult tasks?
- Understanding quality – this is not just about maintaining current quality, as this may not be appropriate in many forms, but appreciating when different levels of quality can be used.
- Managing online identity – there is a tension for scholars and their students in gaining the benefits of a social network, which thrives on personal interactions, while not compromising professional identity.
- Ownership of scholarly functions – there is also a dilemma regarding how much of scholarly discourse and activity we give over to cloud computing services and whether the benefits in terms of widespread use and (often) superior tools outweigh the potential risks.

These issues will be explored in more detail in Chapter 14, as they represent some of the recurring themes of this book.

A theme of this chapter has been the need to engage with new approaches, to have the space to explore these, and to get things wrong. Gartner (2008), an IT research company, proposes a hype cycle for technologies with five phases: technology trigger, peak of inflated expectations, trough of disillusionment, slope of enlightenment, and finally a plateau of productivity. It is a useful model, although one that should not be interpreted too seriously (Aranda [2006] provides a good overview of the problems with it). What it reminds us is that our attitude to technology goes through phases. This is particularly pertinent when one finds oneself in the peak of inflated expectations, when it seems the technology can do no wrong, is great fun and will probably overthrow dictatorships along the way. It isn't long ago that we were praising email as a means of flattening hierarchies in organisations, but now it is often regarded as a nuisance, partly because it has become such a standard tool that we fail to see the benefits it still provides.

Bearing in mind something akin to the Gartner Hype cycle is useful for both technology advocates and critics. For the advocates they should appreciate that after initial enthusiasm may come a period of rejection, before the tool settles into a pattern in their working life. For critics being able to differentiate between hype and the sustained long-term uses is a challenge as they dismiss the tool on the basis of the inflated claims. Social networks are a useful recent example of this; both Facebook and then Twitter were met by an initial burst of enthusiasm. People felt compelled to update their status continually, sometimes even at the expense of their real relationships. First with Facebook, and more recently with Twitter, previous advocates and users have started to reject these tools and delete accounts. Sometimes these people come back but with a more low-key use, as the tool, and the online network, accommodates itself into their broader life at an appropriate level.

I know I've done this, and what's more I'll do it again. Just as with the initial dot-com bubble, the fact that there is hype doesn't mean that the overall direction isn't correct. A technology may not completely change the world in the next 18 months, but it may significantly change practice in the next decade. It is difficult to pick out these salient features when you are immersed in a change. For example, Clifford Stoll in 1995 dismissed online shopping:

Then there's cyberbusiness. We're promised instant catalog shopping – just point and click for great deals. We'll order airline tickets over the network, make restaurant reservations and negotiate sales contracts. So how come my local mall does more business in an afternoon than the entire Internet handles in a month?

Few would doubt we do all of those things online now and much more. So even if the e-commerce enthusiasts were wrong about the speed and extent of

change back then, they were more right than Stoll was in dismissing it. Roy Amara is credited with summing this up: We tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run and underestimate the effect in the long run.

And that's the case with many of the technologies and approaches that constitute a digital, networked, open form of scholarship: social networking, Web 2.0, user-generated content, open content, blogs and so on. Even if their use in scholarship doesn't lead to some of the changes I have proposed, there is one key point – *it will never go back to how it was*. After Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube, iTunes and so on the idea that anyone will go back to the previous model is more fanciful than any hype. Whatever comes after the current trends will build on top of them – just as Web 2.0 built on what had happened in the first wave of Web development. And the people who instigated this wave of development weren't people who had dismissed the Web initially and insisted it would go away. They were people who engaged with it and could see how to take it forward. So whatever comes after Web 2.0 (and I don't mean Web 3.0), the people best placed to understand it and adapt to it will be those who have immersed themselves in the current technological climate.

For scholars, then, the challenge is to engage with the technology, while avoiding some of the hype, and being mindful of the challenges described in this chapter. A willingness to experiment with new approaches and to explore the tensions between new possibilities and established practice is essential in addressing this chapter. In Chapter 5 I referenced Saul Bellow's novel *The Adventures of Augie March*, and the closing lines of that book seem relevant to this attitude: 'I may be a flop at this line of endeavour. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America.'