

Transcript for **Relationships between Economic Systems and IP** video

Note: Interview transcripts have been edited for clarity and consistency. Numbers in brackets **[0.00]** indicate timestamps for the video. Ellipses in brackets [...] indicate that material has been deleted from the excerpt.

Karen Lunsford [00:00]: Attention to economic systems is so crucial because, though we in writing studies are in the knowledge-making business, our IP decisions are often governed by economic entities external to academia, including the entertainment and publishing industries. In this video interview participants discuss relationships between economic systems and IP. They address the different direct and indirect costs of IP decisions. They also discuss multiple non-dominant approaches, including Native American and Latin America perspectives, that exist within the prevailing Western capitalist approach that underlies current U.S. IP law. A full summary of the video is provided in the Video Summary section of the webtext. The practitioners whose voices we share in this video suggest a number of options for having IP conversations about economic systems with students and colleagues. We summarize these in the Pedagogical Takeaways section.

Ellen Cushman [01:15]: [...] When we think about intellectual property it is certainly something that is important to the day-to-day work of institutions and organizations and workplaces. It's kind of a basis of all of the capitalist society that we work in. But all of that and those economies are also highly situated and contingent upon social hierarchies that leave a lot of people out and that tend to ignore quite a few epistemologies for understanding knowledge for or, excuse me, epistemologies for approaching knowledge making.

Michael Palmquist [02:00]: I think that we need to teach our students that these things are really important—that citing the work of others is really critical, that acknowledging ideas are important and matter, and really, in a sense, are intellectual property—they are intellectual property. But you really have to be able to support those folks. So, I think students really need to understand that ideas aren't free—they've been commodified in higher education for a long, long time. And that's certainly the case in popular media and all kinds of other formats, or forums rather. So I just talk to them about that whole notion of being ethical in their treatment of the ideas of others.

Jeffrey Galin [02:26]: The question; well, we have brick-and-mortar buildings and we teach all our classes in those buildings, and those buildings have a great deal of upkeep and cost for maintenance, and yet the university doesn't charge us an extra—they don't claim ownership of our work in our classrooms, of our teaching materials in our classrooms...most universities, despite that overhead cost. And yet, when we do distance education classes, they claim that maintaining servers and providing online support constitute additional support beyond what's normally provided by the university; therefore, they try to claim ownership of e-learning materials. And I think that that irony is not that surprising when you consider that face-to-face classes aren't marketable

except at the university. And that distance education classes have the potential to be marketed beyond the university. And so, the rules are explicitly created in order to create the possibility of additional financial streams. I'll argue in this book, and I would say that most faculty need to understand that distance education shouldn't be perceived as something that's above and beyond normal fare. In fact, ironically, faculty who come to teaching seldom—in our field they have training—but in most fields they seldom have any training whatsoever, right? You're a biologist, you take a lot of courses, you do a lot of research, and suddenly you find yourself in front of a classroom. You might have TA'd in a lab before, but you've never done a lecture, right? So what qualifies you to be a lecturer in front of a whole classroom? Well, you do it. Again yet, when you create a course in a digital environment, which is just as new and just as different, they're gonna require you to take a course, and by requiring you to take a course they can take ownership of some of the material. So that's a conversation.

Tim Amidon [05:03]: As students are bit more progressed in their intellectual development, they can enter the conversation in deeper ways or we can get at more of those underlying economic assumptions and the ways that there's paradoxes and contradictions built into the systems in which we operate. And then start to maybe interrogate where there's different ethical hang-ups in the systems. What can we see as problematic from different lenses—from different stances within these? If we look at one specific textual performance, what do we start to look at?

Michael Palmquist [05:39]: Well, let me throw something in there about textbooks because that's been so interesting to me. I remember, it must've been 6...7...8 years ago, maybe even longer—10 years ago—people really started talking about open-access textbooks in useful ways. We've had the Writing@CSU website, which has got lots and lots of content on it. Many people use it, essentially, as a textbook. A less popular version of the *Purdue OWL*, but it's got some good content in it, and written by lots of good people, including some textbook authors. And for a while people were saying, we need to go with open-access textbooks—it's going to reduce costs for students and all of the rest of it—and there's a part of me that goes, yeah...if you want to reduce costs for students, we ought to be looking at support for tuition because that's a lot bigger, even at a school like Colorado State where we've got roughly \$7,800 tuition per year for full college for in-state students. They're going to spend \$1,000 or less on textbooks, I think, and if you really want to save them money you reduce the cost of tuition. But people really seize on the idea of open-access textbooks being a great thing, and what really worries me about that is that, in composition, you have to be really cautious about quality and new directions. And people are saying, well, why don't we stop using these textbooks, and so I'm deeply conflicted because I've got *The Bedford Researcher* and *Joining the Conversation* and some other books, and I start going, well what is the value?

And what it finally comes down to is that until the field as a whole starts putting in significant resources into the development of new textbooks—like what Rice has

done—Rice has done some amazing work, in terms of the open-access textbooks they're publishing. And the University of Minnesota has done wonderful work. And there're all sorts of great open educational resources that are available out there, but in a lot of cases—and in some of these cases these textbooks are as good as some of the middle-quality commercial textbooks—but they don't seem to be as good as the best stuff that's out there yet. And I think what we need to be thinking about is how do we get over that hump? Can we begin to provide the kind of content that's useful to our students and teachers at a reasonable cost—basically free—to accomplish some of those goals? And what I found is that, you can take a look at one of my textbooks that probably in terms of staff time and the reviews, all the work that they did with design and everything else, they probably put a quarter of a million dollars into that textbook, just in terms of developing it. I don't know very many open-access projects, beyond what Rice is doing, that have put in that kind of money into it. Usually you've got...[you give] \$5,000 or \$10,000 to a faculty member to develop a textbook—an open-access textbook that then can be used. So I worry about quality and I worry about issues like that and I'm thinking will the open-access textbooks—things like Joe Moxley is doing with *Writing Commons*—will they begin to approach the quality and the ease of use—and really the intellectual rigor—of some of the work that's coming from people in the field?

So, I find that really intriguing. There's a cost formula in there; if you really want to get a great textbook put together, it still costs money, in terms of time, and are faculty going to be willing to put in the development efforts that someone from Bedford/St. Martin's puts into it? For example, when I'm working on a new book with them, we have one or two development editors, there's all these other people involved in the mix—really experienced people giving ideas about what you might want to do—how can we set up that same situation and make it possible to do that in an open-access setting? And so we had an article that came out in 4Cs about a year ago, in which we talked about the reward structures and how we build that kind of support or recognition for that kind of support and work into the tenure and promotion decision. And until, we as a field, start to change these ideas, I don't think that we're going to get there. We're going to have maybe republications or repurposing of work that's no longer under copyright by the publishers. We're going to have lots of new exciting work coming out. But maybe it's not going to be quite as good as it would be if we had the support structures and the recognitions for rewards structures in place. So, I think those are going to be big issues.