Episode 73: Katie Linder

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# KL: You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode seventy-three.

# [intro music]

# Segment 1:

# KL: Welcome to “Research in Action,” a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, director of research at Oregon State University Ecampus. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Check out the shows website at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

On this episode, I thought I would talk about some of my favorite ways to network with other researchers, and this is something that I have found to be so impactful more my professional life and my career, and I thought it would be important to talk about a few different topics on this episode.

In this first segment I’m going to talk about I’m going to talk about what do you want to network about? How do you decide what it is you want to network with other people around? Whether that be topics or ideas or just certain people you want to be networking with. In the second segment I’m going to talk specifically about conferences, and some strategies you can use to network at conferences. In the final segment I’m going to talk about networking via social media.

So let me dive in to how do you know what it is that you want to network about? What I have found is that there are kind of three main things that I network about when it comes to research, and that is that there are key people that I want to talk with, and maybe they are key people in my field or they are key people that are doing something that I just want to learn more about the thing that they are doing. It might be that they authored a book on a particular topic or something along those lines. Sometimes I want to network around a particular method. I want to talk with other researchers who are doing a particular kind of research in a particular kind of way that I want to emulate or that I want to learn more about, so I’m trying to network around that particular skill set, and then the third thing is that there might just be a topic that I want to network around when it comes to my research and this is especially true when I’m trying to, thinking about researching a new area, and I want to just learn who are the people in that area, what are the questions people are asking, what are the gaps in the literature, the gaps in the field that need to be answered. So once I’m thinking about the people, the methods, and the topics that I want to network around, I think about are there certain people I can network with in my field specifically, and then are there other people that I might want to network with that are outside of my field? Because a lot of the work I do is interdisciplinary, this is a really important question for me. So for example some of the recent research that we’ve been doing here at Oregon State Ecampus in our research unit has been around closed captioning, and that is a very kind of interdisciplinary topic because we’re interested in questions around distance education and students who take online classes, but we’re also interested in looking at it from the perspective of disability and access. Recently, I presented some of the results from that research at the AHEAD Conference, which is a national conference for um kind of professionals who work in disability services, and that was a really important network when we were releasing some of the results from this research to be talking with people in that field and really trying to get a sense of the questions that they were asking. The conversations I had with people in that field also helped me to frame the research questions we were asking in different ways than I might have framed them if I was just working on that project by myself. So sometimes you can make really important connections not just in your field, but outside your field as well. The second layer of that is to ask, are there people you want to be networking with in your institution that maybe you have not been networking with yet and are there people outside your institution you want to be networking with? So when I first moved to Oregon State, one of the groups I knew I wanted to network with were the professors and faculty working in the Gender Studies Department. Because although I did not come to Oregon State to work in that department directly, it was definitely a connection that I wanted to have, and I serve as, um, Affiliated Graduate Faculty for the Women in Gender Studies Department now. So whenever you go into a new situation, a new institution you can kind of look around and see what are even the more tangential connections that you might want to make to be networking with other researchers who are in that area.

Also, I think networking with researchers outside your institution is super important. It can result in all kinds of amazing collaborations, and particularly with the federal landscape really liking cross-institutional grant collaborations and things like that, having people outside your institution that you know can be really important, and if you are in a situation where you’re going up for tenure and promotion sometimes you need people outside of your institution who know your work very well to be able to write you a letter of tenure or be provide to support you in some other way. Maybe to review your work um as you’re putting it out for publication, so having those connections both in your institutions and outside your institution is really key.

So, once you have a sense of the things you want to network about and where the people might be whether in your field and outside your field, in your institution, outside your institution I think it’s really important to generate a list of questions that you’re trying to answer though this networking so that you’re not reaching out to people just to say hello, but that you have kind of very specific things that you want to talk about. I can tell you from my own experience, both on both sides of that, that if someone reaches out to me and they just want to have a Skype conversation and there’s not really any reason for it, it’s a little bit more difficult for me to yes, then if someone asks for a very specific piece of information that they’re looking for, and I can give you an example of just yesterday. I got a phone call from someone who, originally an email but followed up by a phone call, from someone who wanted to know a little bit more about podcasting and they had very specific questions for me because they were trying to decide if it was right for them, and that was a very easy thing for me to say yes to because I knew how to answer their questions and I knew that I could be helpful in terms of helping them kind of decide if that was the right thing for them. But on the other side of that situation, when I am asking people for more information, one good example of this is I’ve reached out recently to a lot of distance education researchers at other institutions who are in some kind of research unit that is similar to what we have at Oregon State, and there’s not a lot of people, but I am trying to find all the people who are in that situation, just so we can learn what each other’s units are doing and maybe potentially have future collaborations um maybe even years from now. I’m not sure what that will look like, but it’s better if we all have a sense of what everyone else is up to. And so what I’ve been doing is reaching out to these researchers and just using to commonality of both of us having a research unit to say, “Can we set up a quick Skype? I’d love to learn about your current projects, what you’re working on next, and also share a little bit about what we’re working on so that we know what’s going on in each other’s research units” and that’s been a really, really helpful way for me to network in the field and also to kind of keep those connections warm. We usually meet about every six months with those different connections, so that we can learn what’s the latest thing that’s going on in their unit, and are there maybe potentials for grant collaboration, or publishing’s, or research collaborations that we can work on? So that’s actually been one of the really energizing parts of my work recently, is setting up those extra conversations, and I try to do them at least once a month um to find a another researcher that I want to talk to, and maybe I found them because I read their book or article from them, or maybe I just stumbled across some of their research, but I will just cold-email them and just ask for 30 minutes of their time, and it’s worked out very well. But it’s really helpful before you do that to have your list of questions that you want to be asking other people, so I always have questions. If you listen to this show you know whenever we have guests on I am full of questions for them, but I thought I would talk to you a little bit about my current list of questions and also the kinds of questions that I have then asked myself, and I would definitely encourage you to be thinking about your own list of questions to be asking when you’re thinking of networking with other researchers.

My current list of questions is really around one particular topic and that is how researchers are promoting their work, and this is in part because I am currently working on a book about academics and how they engage online and this has been a really interesting question for me for quite some time, but also now because we are now promoting some research that is coming out of the Ecampus Research Unit, and we’re using a bunch of different channels for that. So we’re using channels like social media, and YouTube, and we’re doing press releases and all kinds of other things. So it’s been really interesting for me to talk to other researchers, and some of them have been on this podcast. A good example is my conversation with George Velesianos, which I will link to in the show notes, where he talked about his research video shorts that he creates to talk about his research, but I often ask other researchers about how they’re promoting their work. Whether that’s through a promotional website um and I talked about that with Nyasha Junior when she was on the show, or if it’s through kind of their um – or if it’s through their public affairs office at their institution. There’s so many different channels, and I’m really intrigued by that question right now. A lot of the things that I am networking around right now have to do with something with promoting research. In terms of the kinds of questions that I often get asked when people are wanting to network with me, I get a lot of questions about academic publishing um because I hold lots of different positions or I’ve held lots of different positions in academic publishing, so people ask me about publishing in journals, how to pitch books to publishers and those kinds of things. I now get a ton of questions about podcasting, which is not super surprising, and also I get a lot of questions now, because people know I’m working on this book, about promotion and how academics promote their work online. So I think it’s really important to go into networking situations knowing what it is you want to talk with people about.

I am going to take a brief break. When I come back I am going to focus a little more on how you can network specifically at conferences. Back in a moment!

# Segment 2:

**KL:** Okay, so now that you know the kinds of things that you want to network about and maybe even the kinds of people that you want to network with, I want to talk about one of the best places I think that you can have networking happen, and that is at academic conferences. So I am going to talk about some of the strategies I use before and during academic conferences, but also I want to address what you can do if you cannot afford to go to academic conferences, how you can still network with people even if you’re not physically present at the conference.

If you are able to go to a conference the first thing I think people should do, and we often don’t take the time to do because we get so busy, is to review the schedule in advance. Typically, the program will be posted in advance on the conference website or maybe you’ll get it via email from the conference organizers, and I really think it’s important to go through and plan out your schedule ahead of time so that you can get a sense of who is presenting at the conference sessions and if there are people you want to maybe schedule some extra time to talk with. Once I have reviewed the schedule and I kind of know what sessions that I might want to attend and if there are people there that maybe I know their name. It might be people that I’ve talked to in that I’ve talked to in the past. That’s one kind of networking I like to do is reconnecting with people that I know from previous events or other parts of my professional life, but also sometimes I like to reach out to people that I’ve never met, and maybe I just know their name or we’re in kind of the same circles but we’ve never met before, or even people that I know from social media but I’ve never met them in real life. And I will just email those people and I will ask them if their dance card is full basically, if they have a little bit of time at this conference to do coffee or some kind of meal. I think conference meals are one of the best places to take advantage of networking opportunities because a lot of people, if there’s some kind of conference banquet or if meals are provided by the conference for breakfast or for lunch, a lot of people don’t get booked during those times and they just go to the meals and sit with whomever is at their table, and so that’s a perfect opportunity to connect with people that you want to network with and say, “Are you free for any of the conference meals. Would you be willing to meet me in the conference hotel to go to breakfast, to go lunch, or to grab dinner or even to grab coffee?” and so whatever the kind of open windows are. The other thing that conferences have gotten just so good at is creating these networking times where it’s usually where you can go see who the vendors are, or they do networking breaks where you can refill your coffee or your tea, and those are often really good moments to either approach people or to try to plan a quick meeting between the different session that you might have. But I think planning ahead of time is really key, and then you can draft out your drafting schedule with those meetings in mind that you’re going to be talking with those people.

Now another thing that can be really useful at some academic conferences is meeting with publishers while you’re at these conferences, and this is something that I know, it’s very common for editors to be at conferences in the publication booth at a vendor area and for them to take meetings while they’re at conferences, and so if I am at a conference where my publisher is I almost always go to a meal or I meet in some way, shape, or form with my editor, if they are at the conferences just to check in; see each other face to face. If I was in a situation where I was trying to pitch something to an editor I would absolutely take the time to schedule something with them ahead of time, and see who was going to be at the conference that I could potentially meet with while I was there. Now if you’re not sure how to contact people from the publisher while you’re at the conference, I think it’s really key to go to the conference, find the publisher at the vendor area and just like early on in the conference see if you can schedule some time. Whether that be a meal or a quick meeting. So just kind of do a drop by and see who’s available, what editors are there, and sometimes if there’s no editor there and it’s just kind of a marketing person, you can get the card of an editor or the direct contact information of how you can talk to them after the fact, and this was actually a way that ended up pitching a couple of books, edited collections, on behalf of Oregon State Ecampus to an editor because I talked with their marketing person at a conference and then I knew who I was supposed to contact based on the topic of the book that I was trying to pitch, so editors are great people to meet at conferences if that’s the kind of conference that you’re attending.

The other kind of networking that I think can be really helpful and useful at academic conferences is some organizations will create a sort of buddying program or a mentoring program where if you’re a first time attendee you can meet up with somebody who is a more experienced conference goer, and I think that this is an incredible opportunity for either the person who is a first time conference attendee or for the person who is someone who has been going to the conference for quite some time, and either way this is something that I would absolutely recommend participating in. You get to see the conference through fresh eyes if you’re someone who has been doing it; for a long time, but it also means that you are networking with people who are a little bit more junior in the field and those are the kinds of relationships that you never know where they’re going to go. Now if you’re someone who’s more junior and you’re trying to meet with someone who’s more senior, this is another excellent opportunity to meet with people at the conference, and there’s lots of ways that these sort of buddy and mentoring relationships can happen, but typically you would be emailing each other before the conference to set up some time to meet up, you might have a meal together, you might have a session or two together, sometimes there’s even a networking time that is specifically set aside for these programs, so this is something that I would definitely keep an eye out for if you’re new to a conference in particular. Even if there is no buddy or mentoring program specifically, there is typically a networking time for people who are new to a conference. If you are new, go ahead and go to that time and you can meet with other people who are new um and networking with people who are also maybe asking the same questions that you’re asking about the event.

Another important thing I think people can do when they’re at conferences to network is if you go to particular session that you think are really useful to you, approach the presenters after the sessions. Um there is nothing more fun than being approached by a researcher after your session to have someone say “I really enjoy that; can we talk more about that research?” Researchers love to talk about research. They want to talk with other researchers and share what they know, and so approaching presenters after sessions can be a great way to at the very least exchange a business card, but maybe you can also schedule a time later in the conference to do something like grab a coffee or a meal and maybe talk with them further, or maybe you can also schedule a time later in the conference to kind of talk with them further, or maybe you can set up a Skype call for when the conference is over. Um kind of going back to what I was talking about in segment 1, the presenters that you really enjoy at different conferences are great to follow up with after the fact to schedule something with them later on. So you definitely want to make sure that you’re bringing some kind of business card to the conferences you attend so that you can exchange them, and then I think it’s really helpful and useful to follow up with people on different social media platforms, particularly on LinkedIn, and it’s great to send someone a little message on LinkedIn to connect with them, tell them how much you enjoyed meeting with them at the conference, and if there’s something you want to follow up with; a publication that they had, or a reference that they gave during a presentation or something like that. It’s great to send a little message on LinkedIn and really cement that relationship, and to help them memorable in their mind.

The last thing that I want to address is what to do if you cannot attend conferences for whatever reason. There are so many reasons that many of us cannot attend conferences—budget being probably the biggest one for many people. Um, but often people have family obligations and other reasons why they don’t want to be traveling, so one of the things that I think is super useful now with many conferences is that there is usually a conference back channel, and this is happening typically somewhere like Twitter, where people are commenting on different sessions, they’re talking about different ideas, and speaker notes and all different kinds of things about the conference, and there are some people who are masterful at this back channel. One of the people is Kelvin Thompson, who we interviewed previously on the podcast, I’ll link to Kelvin’s episode in the show notes, and Kelvin frequently shows up on my back channels, and I’ll be like, “Oh, Kelvin, we should meet up!” and he’ll be like “Oh. I’m not there.” Like he’s just engaging with the conference on the back channel on Twitter but he’s not actually there, and he tricks me every time. This has happened multiple times. Where I’ve thought he was at the conference but he’s not there. So the back channel can just be an incredibly fruitful, um useful connection place for people to kind of engaging with the conference if you can’t be physically present there.

Another service that is becoming more popular, especially at conferences that are related to academic technology and educational technology, but this is broadening out as well, is a service called Virtually Connecting, and I will link to it in the show notes, but this is an amazing opportunity that academics have created that allow kind of participants of a conference to share out their experiences through live and recorded conversations about things that are happening at the conference, and it might even be interviews and things like keynotes of the conference that get broadcasted and recorded through his platform, and this is something that I have participated in in some conferences and I have certainly participated in some of the live and recorded sessions looking at them after um for conferences that I wasn’t able to attend. So I will link to this in the show notes because I think it’s an excellent way to be engaging if they can’t be at a conference face to face. This is especially true of conferences that are international, um it can be very difficult to travel to those international conferences, but you can absolutely engage on the back channel.

I’m going to take another brief break, When I come back I’m going to talk a little bit more about networking with scholars on social media. Back in a moment.

# Segment 3:

**KL:** So in segment number 2, I talked a little bit about how you can use social media to back channel at conferences as a way of networking with different people and other researchers, but there are so many other ways to engage with people on social media and so I wanted to make that a full segment. The first rule that I wanted to talk about is the use of different kinds of Hashtags on social media to connect with other researchers, and one of my favorites was created by one of our previous guest, Raul Pacheco-Vega, who created Scholar Sunday as a Hashtag, and this is a way for scholars to recommend other scholars. It typically does happen on Sunday, the day of the week, and you can hashtag Scholar Sunday, and then share out the kinds of people that who follow that are researchers and scholars that you want other people to follow and that you think are really great. This is an amazing way to find other scholars, and to recommend other scholars and really to build a community around research, and this is particularly done on Twitter, and so if you’re looking for people who would be good to follow, who are posting regularly, who are talking about research related topics, um, Scholar Sunday is an excellent source for that. There are also several other places that utilize Hashtags or also just other kinds of groups around particular topics. The other Hashtags that I think are useful, particularly on Twitter, is there is one that is specifically about Ph.D. chat, and then also there’s one for Early Career Researchers, ECR chat um that is also used frequently for research. So looking for those different Hashtags is another great way to kind of find a network with other researchers. The other thing that’s really useful on Twitter in particular is to participate in Tweet Chats when they’re available on research topics that are of interest to you. Tweet Chats are essentially structured conversations where there’s a facilitator and they’re asking particular questions, and then the people who are participating in the Tweet Chat use Hashtag to respond to those questions and to kind of engage with each other around a particular topic. And it sounds a little bit awkward and I think when you do it for the first time it can be a little bit awkward, but it’s definitely different than a typical conversation that you might have, um but Tweet Chats are a really great way to engage with people from really kind of diverse backgrounds that you might not meet otherwise because Tweet Chats bring together a really diverse group of people. So I definitely recommend looking around and seeing who’s hosting these kinds of Tweet chats, um you can use the hashtag Tweet Chat, I’m sure you’ll find different kinds of things. Um and one of the ones I loved is there is a Tweet Chat that happens weekly about productivity, and this is a really good one um I think it’s the Hashtag #prodchat, productivity chat, and I think it happens on Wednesdays. I’ve been able to participate in it a couple of times, I think it’s hosted by I believe Natalie Houston, so I will link to it in the show notes so that people can find it, but those are always just packed with really interesting um strategies, and tips, and tools and lots of good people share links and ideas around productivity.

On other social media platforms it’s also a good way to connect with other researchers, because often you get a slice of them that’s a little more personal and so you hear about their professional life, but you also get to see them on a personal level. Facebook is a really good example of that and Instagram is also a really good example of that. Uh we have had people in the past who talk about their engagement on social media, uh Nyasha Junior is one example of that, who engages frequently on um Instagram and on Twitter, and we will link to those accounts in the show notes, but those kinds of social media accounts, they can allow you to see people from just a really wide range from their perspectives on their life, and so it reminds us I think that researchers are humans too. We aren’t just sitting in our offices writing all day, we have lots of other interest and things, and it can be fun to connect with people on those levels as well.

I think that social media is also a great place to ask for introductions to other researchers, and I’ve had really good experiences where somebody on Twitter, for example, will kind of cc me on a Tweet that they’re sending to somebody else because they think that I might be interested in it, or they’ve posted an article of a particular subject that they think I might be interested in and then somebody else sees that and we get connected in some way because they realize that I’m interested in a topic that they’re interested in too, and maybe they’ll send me a message or a tweet, or they’ll like something that I posted, and all of a sudden that person is kind of in my social media constellation of people that I see regularly tweeting and stuff like that. You can easily follow people and build relationships, it’s such an easy platform to do that. I’ve also had really good experiences as I’ve sort of chatted with people in different tweet chats and other kinds of things just privately messaging them and seeing if they want to set up a quick Skype, or a call to chat about their work. And um also I have received a lot of introductions from other people who have said, “You know, Katie, I think you would like to talk to this person because they do work in a particular area or they’re asking really interesting questions.” I get a lot of recommendations from people who might come onto the podcast from Twitter and other social media platforms. So it’s a great way to just be interested introduced to other people, in addition to just seeking other people out on your own behalf and I think that social media can also be a really great platform to set up those once per month phone or Skype discussion that you’re planning to have with other researchers in your field so that you can start to see how you might collaborate with them in the future, or have some kind of other connection, or project that that you might do together.

The other thing that is definitely something to keep an eye out for on social media is publishers, journals and uh disciplinary association, which frequently have their own accounts and it’s a great way to start engaging with kind of your larger discipline, and if you’re not sure where to find people who you want to connect with on a disciplinary level those can also be great places to start. So one of the things that I do for the journal that I work with, which is the International Journal for Academic Development where I am an associate editor, is I manage their social media accounts and we are frequently Tweeting out articles, and sharing out the different pieces that we have, the new articles that are coming out from the journal. It’s a great way, if you’re in the field of academic development or faculty development, to learn more about the kind of more recent stuff that’s coming out in the literature, so that’s just one example of how you might want to network not just with individual people but with organizations, with journals, with publishers um that kind of thing. I can also share, recently I have connected with a publisher on Twitter who wanted to learn more about the podcast, and so we set up a Skype and had a chance to talk a little more about Research in Action, and I would never have had that connection if I wasn’t on Twitter because we just happened to stumble across each other there. So it’s a great way to connect with other people in ways that are both intentional and also a little bit more spontaneous.

I hope that this episode has given you some strategies and ideas of ways to connect with and network with other researchers um both from your office, at different academic conferences, when you’re back channeling at conferences and also when you’re on platforms such as social media. Um of course I would love to hear all of the different ways that you’re networking and connecting with other researchers, especially if there are tips and strategies you have that I did not cover, and I’m sure there are many. Please feel free to comment in the show notes or Tweet out your ideas @RIA\_podcast.

Thanks so much for listening to this week’s episode, and we will be back next week with another interview. I’m Katie Linder, thanks so much for listening!

# Show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor’s guide for incorporating the episode into your courses, can be found at the show’s website at [ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast](http://www.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast).

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