Commonplace •

5 Things with Katharine Dunn, Scholarly Communications Librarian at MIT

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Looking through my five things I notice they're each about "openness" in some way. From the obvious (open science and scholarship), to open about mental health and what comedy can be, open about what celebrity fashion has to teach us, and, finally, literally finding pools that are open to swim in. Yay for themes!

1 | Unsettling Knowledge Inequities podcast: Perspectives on the UNESCO Open Science Recommendation (season 2, episode 1)

This episode of the [SPARC/Knowledge Equity Lab](#) podcast came out a couple of months ago, when I was digging deep into the ways in which promotion, tenure, rewards, & incentives can clash with institutions' stated values around "open." The [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) crystallizes these issues so well by taking the broadest

possible stance: Science is a human right. Open science, therefore, should be seen through that lens at every turn.

In the podcast we hear from two people who worked on the recommendations, Eleanor Haine from Canada and Fernanda Beigel from Argentina. I found Fernanda's perspective is particularly affecting when talking about inequities in scholarship and bibliodiversity in particular:

“We need to defend multilingualism,” she says. “Mainstream journals, all published in English, have gained in symbolic prestige built through impact factor (IF). As some journals started to have a higher IF, researchers wanted to publish there. This is an accumulation of scientific power that concentrates on these mainstream journals. These journals are 95% published in English. This forces everyone in the world to adapt and publish in English. What we face now is an open science with an English grammar. This is an impoverishing thing for science.”

2 | **Open Science at Utrecht University**

I can't stop talking about what's going on in the Netherlands. A group of universities and funders there signed the [Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), which calls for reforms to the ways that promotion & tenure are evaluated and rewarded. In 2019 they wrote a [position paper on this](#). And now, one of the schools, Utrecht University, is requiring its departments to implement a four-track “Open Science” program starting in early 2022. The tracks are open access, FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) data/software, public engagement, and recognition & rewards.

Most curious, wonderful, and mind-boggling to me is how it will look to reward faculty not (only) for individual achievement in research but for leadership, community engagement, societal value, teamwork. No more “[simple counting](#)!” I'm hoping they can be a model for the rest of us.

3 | **Maria Bamford (generally); Lady Dynamite (specifically)**

This week a friend of mine told me he's been diagnosed with bipolar II, which includes mood swings, depression, and “hypomanic” episodes. I felt equipped to support him, not in small part because of watching comedian Maria Bamford, whose “mentals” include bipolar II.

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

Maria Bamford Knows All The Mental Health Issues

I love anyone who openly and thoughtfully talks about mental health problems (I have them too!). Bamford, though, is [special special special](#): She is smart, knowing, cynical, hopeful, hopeless, smutty, childlike, and a brilliant impersonator. Her two-season show on Netflix, *Lady Dynamite* (made by Mitch Hurwitz, who created *Arrested Development*, which Bamford appears on), is loosely based on her life as a comedian in LA who for a time moves home with her parents in Duluth, Minnesota, because of debilitating depression and mania.

The show is fantastical and outrageous: Maria has talking pugs who sound like Werner Herzog; crises over not meeting a [“vaginismus”](#) sex deadline; flashbacks to being a teenager & selling her homemade spice ropes to a suicidal man who kills himself with them; flash forwards to a run-in with Weird Al Yankovic who tells her she needs to go to the center of the earth to save humankind. But there’s also real humanity and love.

“If you’re cool with it,” says Maria’s new artist boyfriend after watching her set about unwanted violent thoughts, “I’d love to do a bunch of sketches of you. Chopping up your family. Maybe with charcoal.”

4 | **Tom + Lorenzo: Fabulous & Opinionated**

I’ve been out of the habit of reading Tom and Lorenzo’s celebrity fashion blog; in the heart of the pandemic there were no red carpet premieres or galas for them to cover. But I’ve come back to it in recent weeks, and not just to distract myself with fluff.

Because it’s not fluff. Of course, arguably, celebrity fashion has nothing to do with the rest of us. The women in particular are often wearing clothes worth more than my car. But Tom and Lorenzo skip the obvious kinds of judgment — about the person in the clothes, about gossip. They write instead about proportion, fit, color, presentation, context. (I love clothes and find this useful!) They always applaud people who confidently wear what makes them feel good. And they regularly delve deeper, in small but important ways.

About [Billy Porter in 2019](#): “Billy has made it very clear in interviews that he doesn’t consider himself a drag queen, nor does he identify as non-binary or transgender. He’s

been very consistent in pointing out that he is a man working to push the boundaries of what men can and should wear and in doing so ask questions about why a label needs to be applied to it.”

About [teenage actor Elsie Fisher](#): “The pressure for any 15-year-old girl to conform is nearly crushing at times, but it’s nearly unfathomable for someone that age in the entertainment industry. We LOVE that these looks are fun, comfortable, loaded with personality (and a bit of humor), unexpected, and not remotely interested in the male gaze.”

It is refreshing to read commentary that’s fully aware of the capitalist, sexist, & racist world in which celebrity fashion invariably takes place.

5 | Swimming

The pandemic was a boon for some kinds of exercise, like outdoor walking and running. But swimmers suffered, especially those of us living in areas with winters cold enough to freeze lakes and ponds. Closed pools meant that people missed out on swim lessons and skills-sharpening. And this had consequences: An increase in drownings and fewer certified lifeguards. Because of this, in Massachusetts there was briefly a ban on swimming in lakes and ponds over summer 2021.

Many pools are now back up and running. But how to find them? And what if you want help as an adult with your skills? [Swimmers Guide](#) lists pools near your zip code. The [US](#)

[Masters Swimming](#) site lists pools with masters teams (no competitive experience required!), and also can help you [find certified learn-to-swim instructors](#).

Walden Pond, courtesy of Katharine Dunn

— Katharine Dunn