

BOOK REVIEW

LEARNING IN A TIME OF ABUNDANCE: THE COMMUNITY IS THE CURRICULUM

REVIEWED BY

BRENNA CLARKE GRAY
THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Cormier, Dave (2024). *Learning in a Time of Abundance: The Community is the Curriculum*. Hopkins. Pages: 192. Price: 29.95 USD (hardcover)

Managing the abundance of information—or bleaker still, content—in our lives is an ongoing challenge for us all. It is certainly a classroom issue: Does it make sense to teach content and insist on rote memorization in a world where students carry all the information of the whole discipline on a device in their pockets? But it is also a problem we all face outside of the classroom: How do we manage partisan political messaging, health misinformation, and biased news as it floods out of the same devices in our own pockets?

Enter Dave Cormier, who shares in *Learning in a Time of Abundance*: The Community is the Curriculum his prescription for beginning to manage this load. He suggests the importance of three literacies for the twenty-first century: humility, informed trust, and the ability to apply values to decision making as the place where we—learners, teachers, and everyone—must start. Humility is the choice not to weigh in on matters that we don't really know about; to only contribute when our contribution makes things better. Informed trust is about checking the sources that inform our thinking and sharing those sources openly. And applying our values means interrogating and being aware of the values that underpin our practice now, and being willing to change those practices that don't serve our core values.

We have a responsibility to do these things not because we are educators, Cormier argues, but because we are people, and because the internet is made of people. This isn't a prescription for teachers. It is a prescription for everyone who contributes to the abundance of information in the world, which—given the participatory nature of the internet—is everyone. Because, as the subtitle of the book says, the community is the curriculum. Every time we engage online, not only by posting content, but by liking or sharing or commenting on the content of others, we are contributing to the curriculum that we are all learning from. We need to be responsible and kind in our engagements because we, as a large collective, are the only thing that can push back against disinformation, bias, and cruelty.

Cormier is quick to point out that not everyone is equally placed to be heard online, and a real strength of *Learning in a Time of Abundance* is the awareness woven through the book of positionality, equity and inclusion online, and the reality that how we present makes a big difference in how we are treated. Cormier makes the point that those whose voices carry farther have the greatest responsibility to demonstrate humility, practice informed trust, and apply our values to our decisions. Indeed, the more privilege we hold, Cormier argues, the more we must

interrogate the values that underpin the choices we do make, because they are likely shaped by our relative comfort and security. A core premise of the “practices for an abundant world” (151) at the end of the book is that we must learn to see who is left behind by the practices we engage in.

Cormier’s style is compulsively readable; reading *Learning in a Time of Abundance* never feels didactic or preachy, but instead like a conversation over coffee with the friend you most like to talk teaching with. But do not let the ease of this read fool you into thinking Cormier’s insights are not urgent interventions into the very question of why we do what we do as educators. We are not facing a revolution because of generative AI or any other new tool or buzzword; we are facing a revolution because information has never been easier to access, for ourselves or our students, but we have not yet managed to figure out how to adapt to this reality.

Learning in a Time of Abundance is, at its core, a deeply hopeful book. We can start by attending to Cormier’s suggestions for adapting our practice that come at the end of the book and offer hands-on, actionable suggestions not only for managing abundance, but for helping learners to manage it in their own contexts. As I reflect on this book, I am struck by how simply Cormier unravels a truly radical solution to the problems that weigh so heavily on so many of us, from academic integrity and AI-generated essays to panic about content coverage and students arriving unprepared to our classes. Ultimately, the only way forward is to recognize that the relationship of the educational institution to information needs to change. We designed our ways of teaching and learning for a world of information scarcity, but that world has been gone for twenty years or more. It is past time to regroup. Cormier offers the beleaguered, tired educator a way forward.

It is rare to come across a book about teaching, learning, pedagogy, and practice that I would recommend to any general reader, but *Learning in a Time of Abundance*, like its subject matter, is not constrained by the walls of the classroom. Instead, Cormier asks us to think about our responsibilities not between student and teacher but as people engaged in a partici-

patory knowledge ecosystem together. We must find a way to manage abundance and recognize our complicity in the problems the internet has brought to political discourse, information gathering, and more. It is only through this recognition, and through changing our behaviours by elevating the literacies Cormier mentions, that we can build something positive from the seeming mess we find ourselves in. There can be joy in abundance, as long as we remember our responsibilities as a community, and handle abundance with care.