

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to behind the circulation desk, a Wake Tech Libraries podcast.

You'll learn about new items in our collection through lively discussions about new resources with faculty and staff, little known stories about how things run behind the scenes at Wake Tech libraries, and, of course, stories that show how students succeed because of what we provide here at Wake Tech libraries.

I'm your host, Nichole Nichols, instructional services librarian at the Scott Northern Wake campus.

In this episode, we'll have a short discussion about one of our newest books, "Thick: And Other Essays" by Tressie McMillan Cottom.

Thick delves into the realities of black womanhood as it intersects with politics, economics, popular culture, and more.

We'll also chat with Erik Sugg, instructional librarian at Wake Tech's RTP campus, about research hacks that will help students meet those fast-approaching deadlines.

Let's get started.

NICHOLE NICHOLS: In this section of the podcast, we're going to talk about new resources and new books that we've received and to to put into our collection.

And so for today, we're going to talk about a new book that we've received a called "Thick: And Other Essays" by Tressie McMillan Cottom.

So, thick is a collection of eight essays that cover topics of black womanhood and girlhood, beauty, politics and biases against the poor, and race within politics.

To give you a little background about the author Tressie McMillan Cottom is a associate professor of sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Thick is actually her second book, and it was it was recently nominated for a National Book Award.

Her first book was called "Lower Ed: And The Troubling Rise For Nonprofit Colleges In The New Economy", and that one covered disadvantages of how the for-profit university industry, college industry disadvantages poor students and students of color.

And she actually talked to Congress about the same issue.

And she also has a connection to North Carolina or to this area, actually, because she was a

graduate... She is a graduate of North Carolina Central University, and she's also very widely published, both in scholarly and popular publications such as Time magazine, New York Times and The Atlantic.

And she's also had an appearance on The Daily Show by Trevor Noah, or post it by Trevor Noah.

So, I wanted to also talk about just to give you a synopsis of the book, to get you interested in maybe reading this book and checking this out from our library.

I have read the book I read all eight of the essays and I just wanted to talk about two of the essays that really struck me.

So, the first one... the first essay in the book, that's the title essay called "Thick", and this essay discusses the ways in which she is thick, or the ways in which her attributes don't fit in with societal expectations.

And so, she talks a lot about getting into academia and being a black woman, not feeling as though she, you know, her, especially when she started to have a lot of accomplishments that was very uncomfortable for a lot of her colleagues, and she just talks about a lot of the reaction she experienced from that.

And one quote from that essay that she talks that I thought thought was interesting... was I fixed myself even when it causes great pain to do so, because I know that I cannot fix the way the world sees me.

So, she's referring to when she was younger, she had what people call.. She was pidgeon toed and so her mom would always admonish her to fix her feet.

So, she uses that as kind of a kind of a symbolism to describe how that's, you know, in a sense, she's had to always do that going through life.

And as she's had more accomplishments, she's had to fix herself and kind of lose a little bit of maybe her authenticity of who she really is in order to, umm, be seen in the way that she would like to be seen to succeed and to get go forward.

And also the first essay gives a short overview of the rest of the essays in the book.

So, she talks about the one in which she'll talk about beauty, and she talks about a little bit about the other ones that are about politics and poverty and that type of thing.

And in a second essay that struck me, is called "In The Name Of Beauty", and this one caught my attention because it did give me a new perspective about the concept of beauty.

Umm, I've always known that people consider or that beauty can be a very constricting concept.

But in the book, Cottom explains that the one... the further someone is away from the standard of beauty, the more they may buy from the beauty industry to make up for the difference of not being in that beauty standard.

So, in that way, she ties beauty to capitalism and how beauty fuels capitalism.

She also talked about Beauty as political in that it has this ability to uh exclude people and include people based off of, of course, very arbitrary traits.

Umm, so I encourage you to check this book out and read more.

Read either all of the essays, or you can read the two that we just talked about, or the ones you would like to read.

We do have this book at the North Campus Library ready for check out.

So, I'm here today with Erik Sugg, he is a instructional librarian at Wake Tech, the RTP campus, and we're here today to talk about some techniques that can use for your projects with research when you are in a somewhat of a crunch.

Uh, how are you... How are you doing today?

Thanks for coming to the show.

ERIK SUGG: I'm happy to be here, Nichole.

Thanks for having me.

NICHOLE NICHOLE: So, I'm going to start off by giving you a scenario and see what your response will be to this.

So, imagine that you're a student with a research paper that's due in a few days, and you don't know where to start... As far as research.

What are some quick ways to get started as far as databases or techniques?

ERIK SUGG: Ohh, what typically I would always suggest that a student gets started when by talking to a librarian, just to kind of like get a little bit of the database process, demystified.

You know, all of us in this day and age are so Google brained.

You know, librarians included, that I think the first thing a student should will probably have a hard time coming over, you know, getting over is the fact that databases don't really operate like

Google.

And what I would suggest for what we have going on like through our resources is to go to the Wake Tech Library homepage and just go to that, “find it all” search.

It's gonna be the search that kind of like is the one stop shop that connects them to all of our resources.

All of our journals, databases, even the library book catalog, and open Internet sources.

But that's I'd like to recommend that because I think it's the most Google-like and from then it kind of would help them like get a feel for like how databases operate like you know you can do a basic search and then from there you know you can learn how to refine your search and get more parameters set into place to to get your information as relevant to to what you're studying as possible.

So, I would recommend that one.

NICHOLE NICHOLAS: OK, So, what if you wanna take a step back and you're not even sure if you're topic yet and you have other things, you know, multiple things you'd like to research, but you need somewhere to get started... What would you recommend?

ERIK SUGG: I would definitely recommend our resource Opposing Viewpoints in Context. That's available on you know to the library website under our “social issues” resources heading and it can be found on the A-Z list, but as well of course under “O” or opposing viewpoints.

That's a great database, because it... It's very well rounded in terms of like offering information on a lot of hot-topic issues like a lot of current debates and arguments out there.

Everything from like politics, to civil rights to environmental issues to you know things about, you know, just different injustices and you know, sexuality, you know, gender identity, just anything that's got a lot of debate around it.

Students can... as soon as they go to like you see, like an opening scroll.

That kind of like takes them through some different issues, but you can also go to an option for browse issues and that will bring up a huge alphabetical list that every everything they have cataloged to that data.

So, for people at that come up to me particularly like, you know, students who are like an English-111 who are just like I I have no idea where to get started with this.

That's typically where I'll navigate them, you know, check out the issues there, even if you don't end up using that database further.

If anything, just like check out the topics there, you know you can find some great ideas for things to explore.

And of course you can just, you know, like the database name suggests... opposing viewpoints.

We'll see like a wide variety of perspectives surrounding issue as well.

Researchers can often be about, like, exploring what you want to write about as you're doing the research.

You know, like you're you're topic could change, it could evolve, and as soon as you find out what the topic is, you know you're good to go. You know that's half of it right there.

So, yeah, that database and just going to the "browse all issues" is what I would highly recommend for students who are just completely lost, and confused about where to start.

NICHOLE NICHOLAS: Yeah, opposing viewpoints is a great database to start with and I often tell students as well to even just read the the overview and they can write some questions down from there that they'd like to investigate.

ERIK SUGG: Yeah, definitely.

Have you ever used our, umm... It's go to the library website under the videos option we've got one there.

Umm, I believe it's the ProQuest Research Library. That one is a really great one too.

For... umm, once you have your topic chosen, that's great resource for like helping people get started with everything that they need to do in the whole process.

Like how to form an idea... how to form a thesis, how to, you know, think about the organization of the paper, you're gonna write.

ProQuest Research companion, it's called, you know, and and it provides like the video tutorials about if you're confused, you know and just had to demystify the process and you know, as it goes on, it can get like very in depth.

So, like, how do you organize your argument? How do you avoid plagiarism and find your own voice? How do you realize you know, how do you, like, do your citations?

That that's a very valuable resource.

NICHOLE NICHOLE: That sounds like that's just a really great place for someone who is just totally clueless. And, in a crunch, that's just kind of maybe one of those one-stop places where they can get every a lot of things that they need.

ERIK SUGG: Oh, definitely.

Definitely, you know, and it's it's overwhelming when you're doing an assignment like this.

You know, a lot of times... you you just won't even know where to begin.

You know, you just get that immediate anxiety that can kick in of like, what am I gonna write about? How am I going to find this stuff? It sounds very daunting as well.

If an instructor says it's gotta be peer reviewed, you gotta like, you know, make sure that you've got a certain voice that you're projecting in the in your topic, you got a certain argument you're gonna make, and there are resources that will help you step-by-step through all of that to make it... Just not so you know, confusing and scary for you, basically.

NICHOLE NICHOLE: Those are some great tips.

So, last question I'll ask you is how should a student create a a research plan and how helpful would that be?

And so talking about, you know, thinking up keywords or thinking that anything before they get into the databases that could help them to be successful.

ERIK SUGG: A research plan well that one database I just mentioned, ProQuest Research Companion I think is a really great place to go to kind of like start the research process.

NICHOLE NICHOLE: Uh Huh.

ERIK SUGG: And of course, once you get your topic chosen, you know once you've finally, you know, like I was saying earlier, that sort of half the battle, once you find out like what you want to explore... I would say start simple.

You know, just kind of like... keep it as broad as you can, you know, like a lot of times, I'll have students that will come up to me and they'll have some very in-depth thing, but they want me to search for, like a... you know...

How can I prove that teenagers who are drivers should get their driver's license at a later age rather than 16 to... keep from vehicle fatalities from happening as often as they do.

When somebody comes up to me with that in-depth of a a... topic, I'm like, OK, well, let's start... Let's take it back a notch here.

NICHOLE NICHOLAS: Yeah.

ERIK SUGG: Just get to like the find it all... Let's get to a database and we'll start with teen driving. You know, just kind of keep it simple.

And then from there you can pare things down.

You can do little things like if you search multiple words in your keywords.

I would suggest putting them in quotation marks like keep it in my example "teen driving" those two words in quotation marks that we are telling the database that you wanna look for that exact free thing, and from there you can switch your subject.

You can kind of like see where your options are and maybe you can add on like an operator like team driving and deaths or a teen driving and legal age.

You know, something like that.

You know, I really think it's more beneficial for people in the research process to keep their searching as simple as possible, at their initial start and then kind of like work the the mechanics of the database to kind of get something worked out.

I wouldn't suggest for anyone to go in there and like think of a really concise wordy search to start with.

That typically is pretty unsuccessful, so use your resources about starting the research process like that ProQuest Research Companion database and keep it simple and then trust the mechanics of the database to refine your your searches and umm to put the parameters into place.

NICHOLE NICHOLAS: OK. So, those are some great tips that you gave today.

Thank you for joining us.

ERIK SUGG: Of course.

NICHOLE NICHOLAS: Just has a recap... can you list the databases you mentioned today again?

ERIK SUGG: Yeah, I discussed Opposing Viewpoints in Context, which can be found on the library website under our Social Issues tab, and I mentioned ProQuest Research Companion, which can be found under the Videos tab.

And of course, that just mentioned the Find It All search which could be found like from the very

start of the library homepage. That's like sort of the universal one stop, stop. One stop shop, search for all of our resources that we have subscriptions to.

NICHOLE NICHOLS: OK.

Well, thanks again for coming on to Behind the Circulation Desk and we look forward to visiting you at RTP.

ERIK SUGG: Come by anytime. Would love to see you.

NICHOLE NICHOLS: Thanks.

ERIK SUGG: Alright, take care.

Thanks for listening to Behind the Circulation Desk.

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Until next time happy reading.