

## **'What makes it good, what makes it durable: organising our remote scholarly lives to make it not just bearable, but really interesting'**

PAUSE with Professor Simone Hochgreb

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One of the best ways for me to relax is to run while listening to podcasts. In fact, all my non-technical knowledge may come from these audio nuggets fed directly into my ears.

A few weeks ago I was grudgingly tuned to a podcast on not-again-another-software-developer-how-I-made-it-story. But this one was different. Not only does this person has the soothing voice of a trained Tibetan monk teaching you how to meditate, he actually had a few really interesting things to say. Here is the podcast (a bit long, but you can scroll through for interesting bits:

<https://fs.blog/knowledge-project/matt-mullenweg/>

So this guy, Matt Mullenweg, started Word Press, the most widely used free software for building websites, by collaborating for free with other like minded people. Like Jimmy Wales (of Wikipedia), his ethos is to build it and make it free, charge for helping out as a business model.

Along the way, he learned a few things about how to work with people remotely, how to organise work so that people can be productive across space and time, and how to build community and good decision making with vast numbers of people. Whereas this may not be a unique example, I thought it was fascinating that he actually had reflected on it more than others, and tried to capture the essence of both the human aspects, which are essential and needed, and the technical aspects, which are crucial to get things done.

When the pandemic hit, he had built all this experience on how to make it work virtually (and occasionally in person), which now he shares with other companies...

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I am fascinated by the idea of how to work productively with others across great distances, sometimes without even having met people. Sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. We all may have done it at some time in our lives, from pen-pals to our current situation. What makes it good, what makes it durable, and how can we organise our scholarly lives to make it not just bearable, but really interesting.

In this discussion, I hope to bring a few examples to spur the conversation.