

# **BEN PETTIS**

University of Richmond

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## **EDUCATION**

- PH.D.**      **UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, 2025**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS**  
Dissertation: *Becoming Users: Layers of People, Technology, and Power on the Internet*
- M.A.**      **COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, 2020**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES**
- B.A.**      **UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, 2018**  
**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION; DEPARTMENT OF CINEMA STUDIES**

## **ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

- 2025-      **ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**  
Department of Rhetoric and Communication Studies  
University of Richmond
- 2025-      **DIGITAL HUMANITIES FELLOW**  
Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research
- 2021-2025      **PROJECT ASSISTANT**  
Media History Digital Library, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research
- 2020-2025      **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT**  
Department of Communication Arts  
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- 2019      **RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Department of Communication Studies  
Colorado State University
- 2018-2020      **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT**  
Department of Communication Studies  
Colorado State University

## PUBLICATIONS

### REFERREED JOURNAL ARTICLES

- 2024      Pettis, Ben T. "The Inherent Vice of Internet Memes: The Double Bind of Recognition and the Aesthetic of Haste." *International Journal of Communication*. May 2024. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/21356/4670>
- 2022      Pettis, Ben T. "reCAPTCHA Challenges and the Production of the Ideal Web User." *Convergence*. December 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221145449>.
- 2021      Pettis, Ben T. "Know Your Meme and the Homogenization of Web History." *Internet Histories*. August 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2021.1968657>.

### BOOK REVIEWS

- 2024      "WhatsApp: From a one-to-one Messaging App to a Global Communication Platform: By Amelia Johns, Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández, and Emma Baulch." *Internet Histories*, July 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2024.2380637>
- 2022      "The New Laws of Love: Online Dating and the Privatization of Intimacy: By Marie Bergström." *Internet Histories*, May 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2022.2075156>
- 2020      "The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism: By Nick Couldry and Ulises Ali Mejias." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, February 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2020.1718835>.

### BOOK CHAPTERS

- 2025      Hoyt, Eric, Ben T. Pettis, Lesley Stevenson, and Samuel Hansen. "Searching for Similarity: Computational Analysis and the U.S. Film Industry Trade Press of the Early 1920s." In *Global Movie Magazine Networks*, edited by Kelley Conway and Eric Hoyt. University of California Press.

### MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

- Pettis, Ben T. and Mel Stanfill. "What is a Trending Topic? Rethinking Twitter Research in a Post-API Era." Under review at *First Monday*. Submitted July 2025.

## CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

### PAPERS PRESENTED

- 2025 "I'm sure this program will be shut down shortly. It never worked. Yours truly': Platform Ownership and User Affinities Toward Online Spaces." International Communication Association Conference. Denver, CO. June 2025.
- 2025 "Platforms, Websites, and Apps: User Expectations of Types of Online Spaces." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Chicago, IL. April 2025
- 2024 "'fuck /u/spez' - The Reddit Blackout as User Protest Under Digital Feudalism." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Boston, MA. March 2024
- 2023 "Who Watches the Birdwatchers? Creating a Rogue Archive of Twitter's Ongoing Collapse." Association of Internet Researchers Annual Conference. Philadelphia, PA. October 2023.
- 2023 "HTTP 451 - Unavailable for Legal Reasons: A Full Stack Analysis of Online Geoblocking." International Communication Association Conference. Toronto, ON. May 2023.
- 2023 "[dateStart], [dateString], and dateKludge(): A Critical Code Studies Analysis of the Media History Digital Library." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Denver, CO. April 2023.
- 2022 "The Next Generation of Podcasting Has [Not] Arrived: The Potential and Failure of the Video Podcast." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. March 2022.
- 2021 "Know Your Meme and the Homogenization of Web History." Association of Internet Researchers Annual Conference. October 2021.
- 2021 "From Deep-Fried Memes to 'It Needs more JPEG': Image Degradation and the Material Traces of Copying." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. March 2021.
- 2020 "'A Better, More Positive Tumblr:' Regulating Obscenity and Defining Community Standards on Social Media Platforms." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Denver, CO. April 2020. (*Conference canceled due to COVID-19 Pandemic*)
- 2019 "Finstas, Young Adults, and Stardom: The Construction and Presentation of Identities on Instagram." National Communication Association Annual Convention. Baltimore, MA. November 2019.
- 2019 "Pepe the Frog and Drake Approves: Variances in the Exploitability of Meme Genres." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Seattle, WA. March 2019.
- 2018 "Pepe the Frog: A Case Study in 'Meme Magic.'" What is Universe? Communication, Complexity, Coherence. University of Oregon, Portland, OR. April 2018.

**PANELS ORGANIZED**

- 2022 "Resisting Platformization: User Communities Working Within and Against Platform Constraints." (With Sarah Edwards, Zoë Glatt, and Kira Marshall-McKelvey) Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Boston, MA. March 2024

**POSTERS**

- 2022 "Capturing reCAPTCHA: Preserving Ephemeral Web Interactions." DH Unbound. May 2022.
- 2019 "The Tumblr Porn Ban: Power Imbalances of Corporate Personhood." Poster presented at: 2019 CSU Graduate Student Showcase. Fort Collins, CO. November 2019.

**OTHER INVITED TALKS**

- 2023 Hoyt, Eric, Ben Pettis, Sam Hansen, Kat Pan, and Lesley Stevenson. "Inside the New Media History Digital Library." Online Workshop. January 2023.

**DIGITAL PROJECTS**

- 2023-2025 **LOVES, LINKS, ARCHIVES: SAVING AND SHARING THE WENDY CLARKE TAPE COLLECTION PROJECT ASSISTANT & WEB DEVELOPER (ASTRO.JS)**  
Co-Author on a \$298,292 NEH Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Implementation Grant  
Designed Web interface and other front-end systems for an online archive of 863 original videotapes produced by artist Wendy Clarke for a series of 15 video projects dating from the 1970s to 1990s that explored themes of love, community, culture, and self-reflection across multiple underrepresented communities.  
<https://wendyclarke.wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu>
- 2023- **PODCASTRE PROJECT ASSISTANT & WEB DEVELOPER (RUBY ON RAILS)**  
Assessed current website design and functionality (PHP/Symfony) and coordinated migration and upgrade to a new and more stable system (Blacklight). Updated website content and redesigned web interfaces for accessibility, mobile responsiveness, and overall functionality.  
<https://podcastre.org>
- 2023 **BROADCASTING A/V DATA PROJECT ASSISTANT**  
Copyedited exhibit text, prepared images and other visualizations, and formatted materials for online publication.  
<https://bavd.unlockingtheairwaves.org>

- 2022- **BIRDWATCH ARCHIVE**  
**WEB DEVELOPER (PYTHON, RUBY ON RAILS)**  
 Designed a Web app to automatically retrieve public data from Twitter's crowdsourced fact-checking program and parse into a searchable database, including a public-facing website to browse user-submitted notes.  
<https://birdwatcharchive.org>
- 2022- **BALLYHOO DATABASE**  
**WEB DEVELOPER (RUBY ON RAILS)**  
 Developed an online interface to interact with one of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research's databases, including options for staff and volunteers to edit and enter metadata, and functionality for users to search and browse items.
- 2021- **MEDIA HISTORY DIGITAL LIBRARY (MHDL)**  
**WEB DEVELOPER (PHP)**  
 Created a new MHDL website with improved experience on mobile devices, designed scripts and workflows to automatically display new and updated scans as they are made available, developed new options for sorting and browsing curated collections.  
<https://mediahist.org>
- 2021- **LANTERN**  
**WEB DEVELOPER (RUBY ON RAILS)**  
 Performed frontend and backend upgrades to the MHDL's full-text search platform, redesigned interfaces to improve experience on mobile devices, improved functionality of advanced search and filtering, enabled access to OCR text and other metadata via API.  
<https://lantern.mediahist.org>

## GRANTS

- 2025 **PROJECT BALLYHOO: ANALYZING PUBLICITY TEXT AND PROMOTIONAL IMAGE REUSE ACROSS 20TH CENTURY DIGITIZED PERIODICAL COLLECTIONS.**  
**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**  
 Hoyt, Eric, Sam Hansen, Mary Huelsbeck, Amanda Smith, **Ben Pettis**, and Lesley Stevenson  
 \$148,428\*

## AWARDS

- 2023 **KEPLEY TEACHING AWARD**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**  
 For excellence in teaching by a Communication Arts graduate student.  
 \$2,000

2023	<b>GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT COMPETITION FELLOWSHIP</b> <b>GRADUATE SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON</b> Selected by the Media and Cultural Studies Faculty in the Department of Communication Arts. \$11,864
2022	<b>ELLIOT DISSERTATION SCHOLARSHIP</b> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON</b> \$2,000
2021	<b>HELEN K. MEMORIAL FUND SCHOLARSHIP</b> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON</b> \$473
2019	<b>GORDON F. HOSTETTLER AWARD</b> <b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY</b> \$1,000

## TEACHING

### UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

2025	<b>DATA AND SOCIETY (RHCS 345)</b> [In-person Instruction]
	<b>SPECIAL TOPICS: CRITICAL INTERNET STUDIES (RHCS 412)</b> [In-person Instruction]

### UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2025	<b>NEW MEDIA AND SOCIETY (CA 459)</b> Instructor of Record [In-person instruction]
2024	<b>MUSIC INDUSTRIES &amp; POP CULTURE (CA 313)</b> Graduate Teaching Assistant [In-person instruction]
2023, 2024	<b>CRITICAL INTERNET STUDIES (CA 346)</b> Graduate Teaching Assistant [In-person instruction]

2021-2022 **INTRO TO DIGITAL MEDIA PRODUCTION (CA 155)**

Graduate Teaching Assistant

[In-person instruction]

2020-2021 **SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA (CA 250)**

Graduate Teaching Assistant

[Synchronous online instruction]

**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

2019-2020 **INTO PATHWAYS (SPCM 200)**

CSU's INTO Pathways is a program which provides opportunities for undergraduate and graduate level international during their first year at an American university.

2018-2020 **PUBLIC SPEAKING (SPCM 200)**

Instructor of Record

[In-person instruction initially; a portion of the Spring 2020 semester was conducted as online asynchronous discussions due to the COVID-19 pandemic]

**SERVICE**

2023-2024 **SCREENING COMMITTEE MEMBER, RADIO AND PODCASTING CATEGORY**

**GEORGE FOSTER PEABODY AWARDS**

Screened, assessed, and reported on radio and podcast entries as an initial phase of the awards adjudication process.

2022-2023 **GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

Served as liaison between graduate students and the faculty, providing regular updates and communication for department news and events.

2019-2020 **ACT HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL, PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

Screened and recommended films for the annual ACT Human Rights Film Festival.

**AD-HOC REVIEWING**

*First Monday*: 2023 (x1), 2024 (x1), 2025 (x1)

*Internet Histories*: 2023 (x3)

**CONFERENCE REVIEWING**

Association of Internet Researchers: 2023, 2024, 2025

International Communication Association

Popular Media & Culture Division: 2023, 2024, 2025

**SKILLS AND MEMBERSHIPS****PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

2025	Faculty Development Series School of Arts and Sciences, University of Richmond
2024	Undergraduate Research Mentor Learning Communities Delta Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2022	Building Inclusive Communities and the Capacity to Create Change Office of Inclusion Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2020	Trauma-informed Pedagogy Delta Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2020	Inclusive Teaching in Online Environments Delta Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2019	Graduate Teaching Certificate The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT), Colorado State University
2018	Inclusive Pedagogy and Praxis Workshop College of Liberal Arts, Colorado State University

**DIGITAL PRODUCTION SKILLS**

Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Audition, and Premiere.

HTML, CSS, and PHP

JavaScript, Astro.js, Gatsby

Python

Ruby, Ruby on Rails



## ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Internet Researchers  
 Society for Cinema and Media Studies  
 International Communication Association  
 National Eagle Scout Association

## ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

2019-

### **FREELANCE BOOK INDEXER**

Wrote and prepared indexes for academic monographs.

Worked on books from the fields of Literature, History, Art, Cinema Studies, Legal Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, and International Studies.

Produced indexes for numerous publishers, including: Routledge, Duke University Press, Princeton University Press, Cambridge University Press, University of Wisconsin Press and MIT Press.

2017-2018

### **SUSTAINABLE CITIES YEAR PROGRAM, REPORT COORDINATOR**

#### **SUSTAINABLE CITIES INITIATIVE (SCI), UNIVERSITY OF OREGON**

Organized the work of student report writers for the Sustainable Cities Year Program (SCYP)

Communicated with UO Faculty, Students, SCI Staff, and Partner Community representatives to organize and facilitate the SCYP report process.

Reviewed drafts of student reports, and performed edits for organization, clarity, and overall SCI style guidelines.

Ensured that student work was completed and delivered to the partner communities by appropriate deadlines.

2016-2017

### **CAMP DIRECTOR**

#### **DENVER AREA COUNCIL, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

Planned and developed a summer camp program including hiring staff, communication with unit leaders, and coordination with other council employees.

Trained camp staff and provided resources and guidance to support the educational goals of the summer camp program.

Supervised daily operation of the camp, equipment safety, and facility usage.

Directed staff in enforcing camp and council policies and procedures.

## REFERENCES

### **Jeremy Morris**

Professor, Department of Communication Arts  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

6132 Vilas Hall  
821 University Ave  
Madison, WI 53706

jwmorris2@wisc.edu  
(608) 262-1135

### **Eric Hoyt**

Kahl Family Professor of Media Production, Department of Communication Arts  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

6038 Vilas Hall  
821 University Ave  
Madison, WI 53706

ehoyt@wisc.edu  
(608) 262-1673

### **Derek Johnson**

Department Chair; Professor, Department of Communication Arts  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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(608) 262-8788