04

THE PLEASURE (IS) PRINCIPLE

Sounding Out! and the Digitizing of Community

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AND LIANA SILVA

Over the past five years, the *Sounding Out!* Editorial Collective has often heard our sound studies blog *Sounding Out!* referred to as a "labor of love" by our closest colleagues. Usually delivered in a tone that indicates both gratitude and pity—and often preceded by a sigh—the phrase "labor of love" indicates our willingness to "waste" precious uncompensated time from the tenure clock, dissertation timeline, and/or salaried workweek on a blog, with all of the self-indulgence that title entails.[1] Blogging is considered "scholarship lite" among some academic bloggers and tenure-and-promotion committees, who often shunt it directly to the undervalued and much-maligned category of "service."[2] Much like a dysfunctional relationship, our "love" of the field of sound studies (and *Sounding Out!*'s digital medium) has seemingly made us far too willing to donate some serious high-quality, low-value labor on its behalf. (digital) sound studies, we just can't quit you.

Suckers, right?

Nope. As quiet as it is kept—and as challenging as shoehorning that labor into already jam-packed, demanding schedules has been—*Sounding Out!* has remained, first and foremost, a labor of *pleasure.* We not only love

working on *Sounding Out!*, but it also *feels* good and it is *fun* (two affects rarely mentioned in connection with academic work, particularly in current working conditions). Please do not tell our provosts, deans, chairs, advisors, and/or bosses, because pleasurable labor remains labor nonetheless.

While the massive amounts of fun we actually have while writing, building, curating, editing, representing, designing, tweeting, and so on may come as a surprise to *Sounding Out!* initiates, we'd like to think that our careful readers already sense our enjoyment; that, along with circulating information critical to an ever-increasing fold of sound studies scholars, we have successfully used the digital medium to communicate the very gratifying pleasure we take not only in hosting the "mothership" site and its social media constellation, but in the act of community building itself. In fact, we dare to contend that people who identify as members of the sound studies community also find the persistent, multimodal, participatory, and self-consciously accessible sound studies community *Sounding Out!* has cultivated since 2009 to be a very distinct pleasure.

Despite the pleasure that *Sounding Out!* provokes in authors and readers alike, we nonetheless feel like outsiders in conversations about digital scholarship in the digital humanities. Because many bloggers like us use a digital platform created by someone else, the question of whether blogging really constitutes "making"—a key but contested tenet of digital humanities—is a roiling debate. Of course, as this essay argues, we definitely think it does. Most recently, Debbie Chachra's "Why I am Not a Maker" argues against a strictly defined culture of coding-as-making in the digital humanities, maintaining that it is an oppressive "way of accruing to oneself the gendered capitalist benefits of being a person who makes products." We're stuck in the middle—not quite cool enough to hang with the computer dudes making robots and literature databases, yet somehow also complicit with the gnarly benefits of capitalist production. Our position as outsiders is far from unique; it carries with it the same racial and gendered biases that permeate all domestic spaces of society. Our work—editing, community building, and care—is the undercompensated affective and domestic work of the academy. As bloggers we both *are* and *are not* makers, and therefore we are outsiders.

In this essay, the *Sounding Out!* Editorial Collective explores the central role of carefully tended affect in building a cohesive digital community. We believe that even in terms of intellectual connection, "feeling is first," to quote e. e. cummings.[3] Therefore, we have peppered throughout this essay screenshots from an October 31, 2014, online editorial at Google Hangout as a performative insight into our affect—as individuals and as a collective—

Liana M. Silva
if it weren't for SO! i don't think folks would take me seriously as an intellectual, despite what i write and my interests.

Aaron Trammell
wow.

Jennifer Stoever
and that is why "gatekeeper" doesn't describe us

Aaron Trammell
YES.
We're a causeway
A secret entrance
An underground railroad.
A hack

Liana M. Silva
i should specify that academics wouldn't take me seriously

Aaron Trammell
We're a hack.

Jennifer Stoever
and we are trying to show all the good old boy bullshit the door

Aaron Trammell
An exploit in the system
YES!

FIGURE 4.1 Discussion of our relationship to the social capital of *Sounding Out!*

that functions as an ongoing methodological, sonic, and affective counter-narrative within the space of the formal academic essay.[4] Intentionally disruptive, these screenshots provide intimate insights into our editorial process so readers can feel the defensiveness, criticism, and pressure we face on a constant basis; they respond, with boldness and candor, to the feedback we have all encountered throughout our careers about the worthiness of *Sounding Out!* and the blog format. Though *SO!* has become a staple in the sound studies community, we can't help but feel like outsiders looking in to conversations in the digital humanities, which are often centered around the grant-winning merit of boutique digital platforms as opposed to the populous, intimate, and perhaps now antiquated form of web-logging (blogging). But we also want to invite readers new to *SO!* to understand how

together we weave a protective sonic web of humor, backtalk, and so-called colloquial language that not only assuages that pressure but also provides an ongoing source of freedom and pleasure, what Sebastian Ferrada calls "an audible badge, a marker of experience rather than a punchline" that constructs "an alternative aesthetic" through speech, accent, and tone. We hope that the selected screenshots provide necessary push-back to the content they interrupt while better contextualizing the love, labor, and passion that have always pushed our humble blog forward.

Combining our frank, spirited, nuts-and-bolts discussions of *Sounding Out!*'s editorial decisions and history, then, with a theorization of digital community and a qualitative analysis of an *SO!* community-member survey, we argue that *Sounding Out!* has only established itself as a trusted and noteworthy venue for sound studies scholarship through an artisan-like approach to community building that fosters an important (yet often missing) *feeling* of community within and without brick-and-mortar institutions. The digital medium in particular facilitates many of the microinterventions *Sounding Out!* stages in the areas of editing, social media engagement, branding, and active readership.

Where It Started

We founded *Sounding Out! The Sound Studies Blog* in 2009 as a way for three academics interested in talking about sound to stay intellectually engaged while physically separated. Little did we know when we first created our WordPress site that seven years later, our project would become, as Jonathan Sterne describes in the survey conducted for this essay, "an interdisciplinary resource for a massive interdisciplinary sound studies community . . . more important than any journal in terms of disseminating ideas and scholarship." Although the respect and trust we have earned from our colleagues has always meant more than official seals of approval, those seals do represent our rapid growth. In 2013 *Sounding Out!* received an ISSN number (2333-0309) from the Library of Congress and in 2014 became one of only ten scholarly sites whose articles the Modern Language Association indexed in its International Bibliography.[5]

In 2007–8 (the year the *Sounding Out!* team came together like Voltron in Binghamton, New York) sound studies as a field remained fairly diffuse and underground. Interest in sound and audio culture seemed constantly emerging and never fully emergent, arising as it did from unique concerns

Jennifer Stoever
so here's my thing--I do like a decentered sound studies from the position of scholarship. being a "side piece" has produced some great work because of the tension between disciplinary location and interdisciplinary inquiry.. but its lonely in the day to day. and even though it seems everywhere right now, how to successfully reproduce another generation of scholars if there are not dedicated grants, only scattered organizations, no departments/programs and most importantly, no jobs. what happens after this hipness wave passes? also, labor-wise, does being a side hustle just extract more labor from the university's side?

Liana M. Silva
yes, those are all very valid points. i like where you're going with this.

Jennifer Stoever
is sound studies just value added?

Aaron Trammell
or worse?

Jennifer Stoever
uh oh

Liana M. Silva
also, how many sound studies scholars can afford to do sound studies, right?

Aaron Trammell
A contition that necessitates vale added

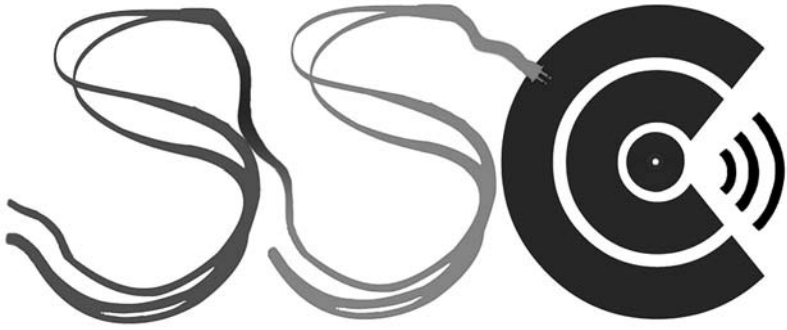
Jennifer Stoever
are we enablers
#thedarksideofSO

FIGURE 4.2 Discussing how *Sounding Out!*'s creation both breaks through the lonely echo chamber faced by most sound studies scholars and creates new—and largely uncompensated—"value" for the neoliberal educational complex.

at different moments in a wide spectrum of academic disciplines—in particular, acoustic ecology, cinema and television, history, anthropology, literature, art history, and ethnomusicology—as well as in thoroughly interdisciplinary fields such as African American studies, American studies, science and technology studies, radio studies, and urban studies. In what Jim Drobnik declared a "sonic turn," a buzz began to circulate around a small canon of recognizable names who published exciting but disparate-seeming monographs.[6] Through Google searches, word of mouth, third-generation photocopies of syllabi, qualifying exam lists, the occasional conference panel, groundbreaking seminars (such as Josh Kun's at the University of California, Riverside, in 2000 and Karen Pinkus's at the University of Southern California in spring 2004), patient, repeated answers to the "What is sound studies?" question from determined graduate students, and dissertations such as Jennifer's in 2007, "sound studies" stubbornly accreted a methodological center.[7]

When Jennifer arrived at Binghamton University as an assistant professor in the fall of 2007, she felt lonely and disconnected from her tight-knit University of Southern California American Studies community and USC's dynamic sound studies nucleus, then composed of Fred Moten, Josh Kun, Bruce Smith, and Joanna Demers. The experience of isolation remains all too familiar for many sound studies scholars even now. There are few, if any, academic job listings for "sound studies" in the United States—and even though positions naming sound studies as a field of interest are becoming more common, they remain in the realm of "a handful." Most academic researchers who work in sound studies are technically hired to do "something else," and interest in sound is presented as a unique methodological take and/or a quirky bonus field. In our current corporate academic speak, it "adds value" to an already solid research profile—which means that, institutionally, sound studies graduate students and professors largely find themselves alone in an echo chamber.

To remedy the sense of stagnation that comes so quickly on the heels of isolation, Jennifer and Aaron began constructing a group called the Binghamton University Sound Studies Collective (BU SSC) as a face-to-face interdisciplinary group to suss out colleagues with even remotely similar interests. At the very least group members had the desire to discuss the exciting new questions surrounding the cultural meaning of sound and listening, seemingly vibrating from everywhere at once. While the group had one well-attended first meeting, a sweet logo, and one *hell* of a speaker series in 2008–9 (Martin Daughtry, Fred Moten, Frances Aparicio, and Trevor



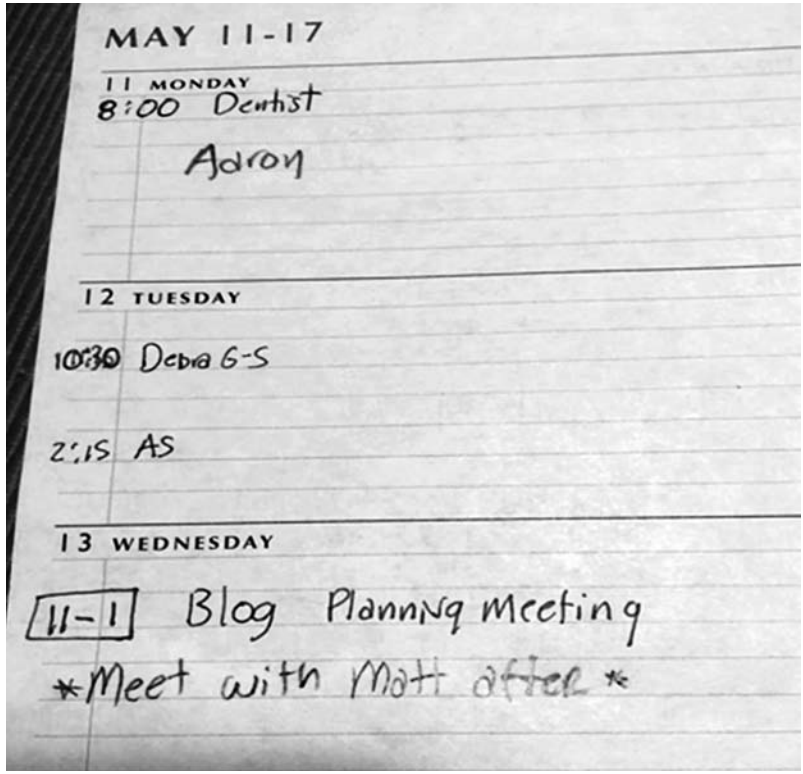


FIGURE 4.3 The official logo of the Binghamton University Sound Studies Collective, designed by Conrad Weykamp, 2011.

FIGURE 4.4 A page from Jennifer Stoever's 2009 daybook, showing our initial planning meeting. We've been a "blog" from day one. IMAGE BY JS.

Pinch), the group dissipated fairly quickly into a lonely listserv and a hardcore handful of awesome grad students who were interested but brand new to the field.

At the time, BU lacked a campus culture and interdisciplinary infrastructure and, apparently, there weren't many interested colleagues. Although somewhat daunted—who wouldn't want to talk about sound while cashing in on free food?—Jennifer and the hardest core of them all, Liana and Aaron, decided to reach beyond BU's highly disciplinary walls and create a virtual community to sustain ourselves as the band broke up. While Jennifer remained at Binghamton, Aaron finished his MA and left for a Rutgers PhD program in media studies; Liana took off to dissertate in Kansas City. But like a CD stuck on repeat, we needed to keep spinning our ideas around to each other. Often. We also hoped that if we put out a virtual bat signal via a blog, we could bring in the folks we were meeting at conferences and reading and writing about via stray journal articles. And they might tell two friends. And so on, and so on. And so on.

The Premise

By design, therefore, we founded *Sounding Out!* as an intervention regarding the notion of affective community as format, logistics, and politics in the field of sound studies. When we say "community," we borrow from Raymond Williams's definition: it reflects "the quality of holding something in common . . . a sense of common identity and characteristics." Interestingly, Williams points out that after the nineteenth century, "community was the word normally chosen for experiments in an alternative kind of group living."[8] Considering that *Sounding Out!* is a space for sound studies aficionados invested in the field in some way—and who are seeking an alternative from silo-bound campus culture—Williams's definition of community as group experiment is fitting.

In addition to Williams's definition, we take inspiration from Jack Bratich's reworking of the term "digital" in "digital community." The predominant understanding of a digital community remains focused on emerging modes of interaction enabled by innovations in computing technology: content management software, Wikis, social media, open-source software, and even MOOCs have been both celebrated and critiqued as new spaces of discourse with the potential to shake things up a bit. We find this definition reductive in its scope, however, as it instantiates the digital as a mode of

interaction informed primarily by the materiality of the platform that hosts the interaction. In other words, it is digital because its mode of publication is digital.

But the digital, as Bratich argues, invokes the former definition alongside a second, older connotation: digits as fingers. This understanding of the digital foregrounds moments of craft production and invisible infrastructural labor, as opposed to a definition that focuses instead on the ways being digital often invokes a discussion of platform affordances.[9] When we founded *Sounding Out!*, the blog as a format was swiftly becoming an anachronism of the aughts. We began at a time when the blog no longer was being taken seriously by the mass media—treated instead as a mechanism for instant celebrity or a narcissistic hobby. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, we encountered an intuitive, reliable, and affordable content management system that WordPress had spent the past decade developing (and has spent the time since simplifying to the point of incomprehensibility). So we began the blog with the ethic of a craft circle, trading tips with one another as we learned the WordPress platform. This ethic even seeped into our editorial practices—in which we curate, edit, array, and host with a care often taken only by small, artisanal presses—and circulated through the social media networks of like-minded crafters interested in continuing the dialogue. Jenny Sundén calls this a "transdigital affect," or "a type of corporeal relationality that arises in contemporary passionate encounters with the analog made possible by, or realized through, the digital."[10] *Sounding Out!* uses a digital platform to respond to the traditionalist model of the humanities the way that punk zines allowed radical new voices into the sphere of rock journalism. We are digital activism.

First and foremost, our move to combine craft production with a group experiment in digital community building came from a desire to push the rhetorical boundaries of sound studies and the sensory nature of "writing" itself. We considered, like Mark Sample, "Why must writing, especially writing that captures critical thinking, be composed of words? Why not images? Why not sound? Why not objects? The word *text*, after all, derives from the Latin *textus*, meaning 'that which is woven,' strands of different material intertwined together."[11] The epistemologies through which we apprehend our knowledge affect the modes in which we approach and understand it. Simply put, a sound translated into text is qualitatively different from a live experience of it, and this commonsense fact deserved more than just a nod within our tradition of scholarship.

Working in a "born-digital" format enabled us to think critically about

how to present what Marcus Boon calls "sonic realness" in sound studies scholarship and to do it in public, where both our successes and our shortcomings could enable others' work.[12] For example, in addition to embedding sound within posts—with varying degrees of integration—*Sounding Out!*'s monthly podcast has been an important speculative solution to the problem of scholarship through sound. By offering a monthly broadcast with minimal written notes, we have hoped to provoke sound studies scholarship to listen more closely to itself. The podcast space is deliberately unstructured, and broadcasts vary from radio style exposé to interview to digital sound art installation. By remaining freeform, we hope to represent the diverse array of modalities interdisciplinary engagement takes. We serve our constituents by allowing our podcasts to take the forms most necessitated by members of the community.

In addition to the logistics of rethinking the nature of work in sound studies, there has also been an infrastructural need for a communications network. Sound studies in the United States has remained dispersed within the disciplines, even after the European Sound Studies Association formed in 2012. Until 2013 there were no large-scale U.S.-based academic "sound studies" events, although chartered groups represent and vivify the field in several major organizations.[13] Without formal institutionalization in the United States, the field has remained productively critical and refreshingly rhizomic, but its lack of formality has its drawbacks; the exciting interstices of our field remain "dark matter," comprising the bulk of "sound studies" but remaining hidden save for the occasional special-issue spectacular. (Thank you, *Social Text* [2010]! *Performance Research* [2010]! *American Quarterly* [2011]! *differences* [2011]! *Radical History Review* [2015]!)[14] And although the infrastructural work that occurs behind the scenes at conferences and departments across academia is valiant, to say the least, we saw that the field needed a forward-thinking forum that allowed for the expression of its radical sonic epistemologies and interdisciplinary experimentation.

Sounding Out! makes the "interdisciplinary" aspect of sound studies more audible, consistent, and apparent. It highlights existing affinities and makes new contacts between formal groups and individuals by circulating calls for papers on Facebook and Twitter, posting conference previews that address the "state of the field" and cull panels of interest, cross-posting and cosponsoring topical series with groups such as IASPM and *Antenna,* hosting a monthly "Comment Klatsch" open forum (2013–14), and adding media scholar and longtime supporter Neil Verma to the team as SCMS/ASA special editor in 2014. (Neil coordinated guest editors and writers from these

organizations.) Very deliberately and through multiple means, *Sounding Out!* spins a center of gravity for sound studies, enabling a sense of community effort, pleasure, and enthusiasm to fuel the push to new areas. Moreover, as we connect with digital humanities scholars via Twitter and HASTAC, we see others asking similar questions about media, format, and research "tools." *Sounding Out!* articulates a #dhsound relationship, even when as "bloggers" we often had felt left out of the DH conversation.

The Politics That Guide Us

In terms of politics, *Sounding Out!* pushes the field through its editorial focus and demography. Every post hosted by *Sounding Out!* provokes conversation about social difference and power, fundamental topics lost or outright evaded as sound studies' newest efflorescence gained momentum in the 2010s. Even as late as January 2015, a sound studies colleague sent out a Facebook message that appeared in Jennifer and Aaron's feeds describing an application received for a new sound studies book series in which the editorial board and prospective authors were all males whose proposed topics blithely ignored the multiethnic and transnational issues at stake in the field.[15] At *Sounding Out!* we proactively think about gender, about race, about class, and about sexuality. By taking an unequivocal stance that politics matter both within and without the field, *Sounding Out!* fosters a material sense for its readers and writers of *being listened to* and *having a voice*, enacting a self-aware and critical public conversation that remains grounded in sound studies' social impact and that continually centralizes the work of scholars who might otherwise be marginalized, even in the generally friendly atmosphere of an emergent field.

Moreover, we don't just talk the politics, we show and prove our commitment to amplify different voices and to reach out to a wider readership. We polish our writing to make it readable: we aim to attract interest rather than assuming it (as much scholarly writing does, to its detriment) and aim for an accessible tone that opens up the rigor of our field beyond the academy. We often describe *Sounding Out!* as the site where our nonacademic friends, family, and colleagues can finally "get" what we have been spending years of our lives studying and see why it matters. At the same time, the *Sounding Out!* Editorial Collective actively recruits an ever-expanding team of regular and guest writers who more accurately represent the demographics of sound studies.

Jennifer Stoever
and I really do think we have tapped into a huge vein of work on power in sound studies that was not on the Sound Studies agenda (other than a few folks).

Aaron Trammell
Yeah, I think so, too.

Jennifer Stoever
my grad class was talking about race and sound yesterday like it was no thing and it made me happy but also like YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW.

Aaron Trammell
Yep!

Jennifer Stoever
and unless we stay vigilant about power, it easily slips out of conversation

Liana M. Silva
YUP it does...

Aaron Trammell
Agree.

Jennifer Stoever
SO! is always listening
in that sense I see us in the role of an amplifier
if volume is power. . .
we turnt up what we wanted everyone to hear

Liana M. Silva
#turndownforwhat

Jennifer Stoever
and muted the other stuff
at least where and when we could

Aaron Trammell
Totally!
I really like the always listening metaphor
Not as a gatekeeper.
But as a friend.

FIGURE 4.5 Discussing the need to "stay vigilant about power" and race and how we see *Sounding Out!* as an amplifier, a listener, and "a friend."

When *Sounding Out!* plots our publishing calendar, we think about academics and nonacademics. About senior and junior scholars. About graduate students. About women. About people of color. About people at various points along the spectrums of sexuality and gender. About specialists and nonspecialists. About alt-acs and independent scholars. We actively seek artists, sound professionals, curators, musicians, DJs, game designers as practitioners, experts, and theorists. While we cannot promise perfection, we do promise perpetual vigilance; our open submission policy, comments section, and social media platforms enable our commitment and allow our readers to assist in this process. We host diverse conversations not as a vague gesture toward inclusion or a specious invitation for "others" to join a preexisting conversation, but rather as a blueprint to construct a lasting, interactive community that values a variety of epistemologies, welcomes diverse and multimodal forms of rhetorical address, and involves and connects people rather than compiles an abstract, empty referent. While the online format enables *Sounding Out!* an unprecedented reach and a much more democratized distribution network, our *Sounding Out!* community thrives through a digital rendering of an analog sense of affect, as our survey results reveal in the subsequent sections.

Blogging and/as Community and Platform

"Blog" is a key term for the editorial team. It is literally embedded in the URL of every webpage of the site, sure, but that embeddedness is emblematic of how "blog" is more than just a noun for us. Blog is ethos, rhetoric, and form.

For us the term "blog" best captures the productive tension *Sounding Out!* creates between "journal" and "magazine," "seriousness" and "play," "academic" and "public," with the added layer of sound and visual media capabilities a digital platform enables. Our commitment to the term is both practical—"soundstudies.com" was already taken, so "soundstudiesblog .com" seemed like the next best address—and tactical, freeing us to experiment in ways that might "tarnish" a journal's reputation or frustrate a magazine's readership. Furthermore, the close association of "blog" with Internet 2.0 immediately signaled different expectations to our writers and readers—namely that there will *actually* be sound embedded in the writing in a meaningful way.[16] For many of our writers, just knowing *Sounding Out!* offers them the capability to embed sound significantly shifted how they approached their work.[17] Although many of our posts appear at first glance

Liana M. Silva
and i'd be interested in exploring more the concept of the blog, to see how that fits into what we're saying/experiencing.

Jennifer Stoever
i think we cling to the word blog because to us it signifies a kind of freedom and flexibility to reinvent and evolve that the other terms don't seem to.
what the hell is an "online magazine" anyway?
you know?

Aaron Trammell
Yeah.

Liana M. Silva
it would be neat to situate SO as blog in a broader conversation about blogs.

Aaron Trammell
I'm more practical with it.
We're literally stuck with it.

Jennifer Stoever
true

Aaron Trammell
It's part of our identity.

Jennifer Stoever
it is in our name

Aaron Trammell
Like it or not
So lets not shun ourselves for it
Lets embrace it and love it.

FIGURE 4.6 Our discussion regarding concerns over the term "blog."

to be written posts that include sounds, our editorial experiences with writers and their responses to our survey (discussed below) reveal a much more complicated process at work. Using a multisensory digital genre enables folks who are writing for online platforms to "think with" sound and image in new ways, from the very inception of an idea, an advance that has significantly shifted the writing itself. Furthermore, the flexibility of the medium (e.g., add a widget on the sidebar, review the list of categories for the posts, embed an audio file in a post, start a real-time discussion in the comments) allows us to constantly reinvent how writing about sound studies looks and sounds. A tour of our readily accessible back catalog will show how much we've grown and how our editorial sensibilities have developed, particularly in using the visual as a sonic medium online. The categories in themselves allow us to index a field that is no longer burgeoning but still changing and responding to current events.

Over the years we as a team have debated whether to move away from a blog format, especially as we considered how changing our nomenclature to "journal" would give us a certain legitimacy with academic audiences outside of our readers and writers. Shifting the title to "journal," however, shortchanges the many others who are doing great—intimate and immediate—work with blogs. We lose in spirit when we identify as something we are not. So we revisited our charge and decided that we *are* a blog. We didn't need to be a journal: there are now journals publishing work in sound studies, and we recognize that some scholarship benefits from the slow approach of a print journal. We do not see blog in opposition to journal; all three of us regularly read, publish, and cite print scholarship. *Sounding Out!*, however, provides a new space for a different kind of scholarship, because it

- is improvisational,
- responds to current events, and
- mediates between academic scholarship and nonacademic responses and the praxes of both.

More importantly, *Sounding Out!* is not just a different format for academic scholarship; it forces readers and writers to consider the way the work is produced. As blog editors, we work closely with writers about their writing, we communicate constantly with them regarding revisions, we promote tirelessly their work via our social media profiles, and we ultimately see the creation of the multimedia blog post as a collaborative effort. We do not leave our writers alone. We are there via email, tweet, or even in conversa-

tions happening in the comments to a draft. The blog, in essence, is not just a space online to post work; it also becomes a work ethic where we develop and produce each other's work. We write, we comment, we post, we listen.

It is also important to point out that hosting a blog requires a kind of work that journals often take for granted: we must vigilantly tend to our presence in the World Wide Web. Every post is carefully tagged not just for the sake of our readers but also for the sake of connecting *Sounding Out!* to online searches around the world (and permanently archiving *SO!*'s participants). If the categories are an interior indexing mechanism (like a table of contents), tags are echoes bouncing back into the internet. (They literally help to index us for search engines.) This careful attention to categorization also helps us stand out in search results. The essential work of search-engine optimization—categorization, headline building, index management, and layout (the mundane tasks of web maintenance)—is seldom recognized as valuable labor by the academy. We work hard to make sure that *Sounding Out!* blog entries appear as relevant search results for anyone looking for insightful reading on sound. These tasks exemplify the best practices in digital publishing and make clear some of the many ways that digital publications can be evaluated.

And this is where form begins to trump content when it comes to the label "blog." While much academic energy expends itself in debating whether a blog "counts" as much as print scholarship, scholars and administrators alike pay very little attention to the structure and function of a blog as digital craft of a radically new order.[18] Precisely because of its radical affordances, the debate over "public scholarship" somewhat belittles the participation enabled by the blog form: How else could two graduate students of color and a first-generation, working-class junior academic (two women, one man) establish a publication that has made such deep imprints in the field? The blog threatens established hierarchies and allows for new voices to slip in and expand discourses that previously have been hermetically sealed. The blog can do this because it relies on affective affinities between its editors, writers, and readers, as opposed to the economic and patriarchal affinities of the print journal, the established hierarchies of rank and review in the academy.

We, as editors of *Sounding Out!*, consciously choose "cred" over "credit," particularly when working with our authors. The long hours spent editing (and laying out) each post are uncredited, and many colleagues assume the vetting to be less rigorous than the work of peer review for a journal. No course releases are provided for our work; no grants have ever been

Jennifer Stoever
I still like the idea of a platform
in the old sense of the word, not just digital

Liana M. Silva
that's precisely it: we provide a platform.

Jennifer Stoever
we built our own platform from which to speak, which is difficult to do.
but we also recognized that listening is just as important as speaking--and we cultivated a community of listeners

Aaron Trammell
I love that!

FIGURE 4.7 Our discussion of what the term "platform" means to us as an editorial team.

awarded to us; and *Sounding Out!* was given only a couple of sentences, under "service," in Jennifer's official tenure case. This is not to say, however, that we haven't accrued other important benefits from our labor, such as much higher visibility, more invitations to editorial boards and collectives, and wider national and international networks than are available to many early-career scholars and alt-academics. Most meaningful, however, to the three of us is the strong sense of "cred" we have steadily earned within our community by maintaining pleasurable professionalism and a superlative internal standard. Those who become part of our community come to rely on us, and in turn they do what they can to spread the word.

While the "always-on" feel, conversational tone, and time-sensitive publication of *Sounding Out!* certainly have helped build this actualized community, we as editors have built it link by link by link.[19] Linking is not terribly sexy labor—both web users and university administrators take it for granted—but to us it feels like breathing, an almost unconscious practice necessary to animate the entire structure. For example, our decision to embed links rather than use footnotes was tactical rather than stylistic (even if it runs counter to the style guides we memorized as undergraduates), enabling us to further embed ourselves within conversations about sound occurring on the web. Links perform the function of citations, but they also shape search-engine results; according to Tim O'Reilly, the more "prolific

and timely" a blog's links (and "self-referential" within a community), the more the process of "bloggers paying attention to other bloggers magnifies their visibility and power."[20] And sure enough, after seven years of tireless linking between blogs, journals, universities, and social media sites (over 17,400 tweets as of July 2016!), if you enter the search term "sound studies" in Google (as we asked our survey respondents to do), *Sounding Out!* comes up in the first five entries, often in the top three, just under the Wikipedia entry (which lists us) and Sterne's canon-making *The Sound Studies Reader* as key resources for the field. Importantly, our location means that just about *anyone* looking up sound studies—from undergrad to sound professional to grad student to colleague to grandparent—will come across *SO!* and its interventions regarding sound, social difference, and power early on, insuring such inquiry will become—and remain—the heart of the field. Our hard-fought Google rankings represent something far more important than winning results of a popularity contest or nice evidence of "reach" for university administrators perusing our tenure files; it reveals the literal and figurative "platform" we have worked to build for ourselves and our community. Again, we've developed "cred" in lieu of "credit."

When we met in a humid apartment in upstate New York to plot a sound studies blog back in 2009, one of our key goals was to provide indelible visibility to the top-notch contributions we knew were being made to sound studies by scholars of color, graduate students, junior scholars, and other disempowered groups in academia, so that their role in building this growing field could not be erased, ignored, silenced, hijacked, buried, or claimed by others better positioned by social and institutional privilege and its attendant cultural capital to gain conference spots and find publishers for their work. There is solidarity in the affects produced by giving voice, making visible, and—above all else—listening. As Sundén argues, "The ways in which we imagine and feel for technologies matter," so we decided to build our own site and to do so in a way that celebrates the people and the scholarship perpetually at the fringes of most fields, but especially those involving technology and music.[21] *Sounding Out!*'s consistent publication and voracious linking structure created the platform; we then combined well-written, cutting-edge, quality scholarship with participatory social media; targeted blogrolling; in-person conference marketing and social events; active recruitment and developmental editing; and colleagues' support through retweets, shares, pings, and traditional citation to create an ever-growing community of listeners surrounding it. The blog listens, it breathes, and it provides a center to anchor the precarious labor of fringe

scholars who might otherwise be swept away in the market-driven and opportunistic frontier of the digital rhizome. Industry practitioners, graduate students, and independent scholars have the most to lose by blogging, but they also have the most to gain when it is done right. We strive to support these vulnerable scholars in any way we can.

Survey

Because our goal has always been to foster a greater degree of affinity around the topic of sound studies, we felt an essay of this kind would be incomplete without affording some insight into how *SO!*'s primary participants understand this sense of community (rather than just speculating or assuming our theories always rang true). We wanted to listen to the participants in our community so that we best represent ourselves as the collective, posse, and crew we are. Our blog would not be as successful—or as fun—as it is without the labor of the writers who contribute week after week. To better understand how *Sounding Out!* serves its contributing network of digital scholars and activists, we conducted a survey that queried for qualitative data regarding the publication's reputation, circulation, reception, and editorial process. We chose not to administer our survey anonymously due to the level of detail we requested—essentially, we would have been able to identify respondents anyway—and we sent it to every guest writer who has written for *Sounding Out!* since the site's establishment in 2009. In total, we received twenty-four responses from a total pool of one hundred participants. We administered three follow-up questions to these twenty-four respondents in late January 2015 and received twelve responses.

We coded the results using a grounded theory methodology that allowed our data to speak for itself and reveal a set of relevant categories.[22] During the coding process, we compared results and selected emerging themes and categories as well as identifying several interesting (yet understated) categories to unpack in this essay. Our aim here is to highlight a sense of consensus about *Sounding Out!* as well as to provide some insight into how this consensus has been challenged, for instance in terms of the editorial process or our place in the digital humanities universe.

We also chose not to make our survey anonymous because we felt that personality and profession would play heavily into the ways in which our respondents would consider the rife political nature of these questions. As such, we wanted to be able to weigh and acknowledge how responses were

relative to a particular professional positionality. We also wanted to better understand and credit the labor of our contributors. We posed the following eight questions (or prompts) to our survey respondents:

1. How would you describe *Sounding Out!*? How do you see it in relationship to the digital humanities community?
2. Describe your personal involvement in *Sounding Out!*
3. How was your experience of the editorial process?
4. Please describe your experiences with any or all of our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr).
5. Has *Sounding Out!* aided and abetted your scholarship, art, sound work, and/or any other capacity? If so, please tell us how.
6. What has been the best part of being involved in *Sounding Out!* over the years?
7. What do you think that *Sounding Out!* could do better?
8. Any final thoughts you'd like to share with us?

We then asked all respondents these two follow-up questions:

1. When you search for "sound studies" in Google, where is *Sounding Out!* in your results?
2. Very basically and honestly, why did you publish your work on *Sounding Out!*?

The respondents had the opportunity to respond online between April and May 2014, just in time for the blog's fifth anniversary, and to follow up in January 2015.

In terms of broad trends, respondents commented about our editorial acumen, pointing out how rigorous the editing process is and how rewarding it is at the end. Our respondents saw *Sounding Out!* as a resource, a hub, and a platform, but very few saw it as a "blog," judging by their avoidance of the word itself. Many also follow *SO!*'s Twitter feed, which they enjoyed both for its informative and for its personable qualities. Respondents used words that suggested they *feel* an affective connection to *Sounding Out!* and the community it fosters: we noted the recurrence of words like "helpful," "connect," "accessible," and "isolation." Survey respondents also noted that they came to the blog to keep up with the field and that, in various ways, it enabled them to feel part of a wider community. In the following subsections we discuss the results in detail, focusing on how respondents felt a connection

to sound studies, understood our editorial process as peer making (not just peer reviewing), defined themselves as writers AND readers, and actively engaged with *SO!*'s microinterventions on Twitter.

Connections with the Discipline

Although we think of the website, our bloggers, and our readers as the *SO!* community, we also see ourselves as part of bigger disciplinary communities, part of sound studies, and part of digital humanities. Because we do not affiliate with an institutional structure to house our work—and have received no external funding—we rely on connecting with other scholars to feel like part of an academic network. Our bloggers agree that they feel connections with those disciplines and with each other through *Sounding Out!*

In the survey, several respondents across ranks mention how they see *Sounding Out!* as a way to stay involved with sound studies. For example, Meghan Drury (a graduate student when she took the survey) mentions that "*Sounding Out!* provides an important digital resource for sound scholars in the U.S. and worldwide . . . the posts on *Sounding Out!* stimulate my intellectual development and encourage me to think about sound scholarship in new ways." For Drury, the blog provides not just reading material but also professional development within the field. Associate Professor Priscilla Peña Ovalle, who describes herself as a scholar in a field "adjacent" to sound studies, states that writing for and reading the blog become for her a way to stay in touch with the field. Kariann Goldschmitt, now an assistant professor, shares that "the network of thinkers involved in the site is really exciting. Whenever I run into people at conferences, we have a deeper understanding of each other's work. That's incredibly rewarding." Reading the blog becomes a way to perform scholarly community, to understand the work of other sound studies scholars by reading their work on the site and sometimes engaging them in conversation via social media or email. *Sounding Out!*, in this case, is a meeting ground for ideas and scholars. And bringing scholars together to talk about anything is like herding cats, #humblebrag.

Regarding digital humanities, some of our respondents were unsure about their understanding of the term "digital humanities"—or if *Sounding Out!* qualifies based on a rubric of "big data"—but others believed that the blog exemplifies what a project-based digital humanities community can be. For example, recent PhD and now assistant professor Steph Ceraso points out, "I think that the *Sounding Out!* community is a wonderful example of what the DH community strives to be: a welcoming space for new ideas and

diverse voices, a community that encourages collaboration, an open community that freely creates, shares, and builds upon ideas, and a community that is always respectful and generous to its members." She stays away from references to the digital platform and instead focuses on the possibilities of a space that brings together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners, a situation particularly meaningful for her as, at one time, the only student in her department dissertating on sound studies. Meanwhile, professor and curator of the Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art Timothy Murray connects *Sounding Out!* with DH conversations about "hack vs yack": "*Sounding Out!* is a forceful, performative blog that links makers, thinkers, and listeners in the critical involvement of studying sound." Overall, the survey responses show that *Sounding Out!* offers an understanding of community aligned with the social connotations of the digital, but one whose meaningfulness and pleasure are enhanced through the relationships *Sounding Out!* enables and strengthens IRL (in real life).

Editorial Process

Commonsense undertones carried by the word "blog" can betray the editorial labor that goes into each post, which is connected to how editing is perceived in academia overall: as begrudging necessity rather than pleasurable community praxis. In other words, editing is considered service, an undervalued category of scholarly work. Ever-dizzying work schedules and publication expectations in the humanities and social sciences have made editing a far less collegial practice, one performed quickly, quietly, and with less-than-desired amounts of interchange. The traditional blind peer review model, particularly when combined with the work speed-up, can lead to a one-sided exchange of punitive comments rather than productive feedback; after all, the same busy colleagues with little time to form a writing group are the same folks tapped, often unexpectedly, to perform uncompensated ad hoc editing for professional journals. More often than not the cloak of anonymity, proposed as a meritocratic guarantee of objectivity and quality, masks curtness and flat-out rudeness as reviewers brusquely pass judgment rather than leaving comments intended to develop the piece. The current traditional editorial model leaves writers bereft of mentorship or critical dialogue about their work at perhaps its most crucial point; even if a writer discusses readers' feedback with their editors, it is mainly in terms of "what needs to be done to satisfy the readers" to get the piece published. There is rarely, if ever, another read beyond copyediting. Not merely a missed oppor-

tunity for productive exchange, traditional blind peer review (as it is currently practiced) actively fosters isolation.

Because we consider the community-building function of *SO!* as its primary purpose, we prefer the verb "host" to describe how we disseminate scholarship, rarely using the word "publish"—even if the button we click on WordPress says exactly that. Our respondents, too, emphasized the role of the blog as a host for sound studies scholarship. For example, Assistant Professor Tom McEnaney mentions that "*Sounding Out!* is the preeminent place to go—in print, or online—for innovative work in sound studies." His comment draws attention to the blog as a location where readers come to find new work in the discipline. Goldschmitt states, "*Sounding Out!* is an important forum for discussion and nascent scholarship." Professor Karl Swinehart adds, "*Sounding Out!* is an important venue where scholarly work within sound studies is presented in a multimodal format and in an idiom that is accessible across disciplines." The references to the blog as "venue," "forum," or other site to encounter work in sound studies draw attention to how the blog provides writers with a platform to share their work while connecting them to readers eager to hear what they are working on.

For *Sounding Out!* to host exciting writing and new research, as editors we work as cohosts throughout the editorial process. Combining Kathleen Fitzpatrick's "peer-to-peer review" model, in which editors and writers are known to each other, with the praxis of developmental editing more common to popular print media and trade presses, *Sounding Out!* pursues editing's community-building possibilities through practices that build trust and accountability through communication.[23] As McEnaney states, "As a writer, I found the editorial process intensely engaged, and incredibly helpful." In addition to providing writers with "extensive freedom in style and locution," as editors we operate as a medium connecting writers to others through tone and address. Murray recognizes that we work "assiduously with bloggers to keep posts accessible to the broad audience of the blog." Not only does our credibility as a resource lie in the editorial work we do, but we also believe that our "peer-to-peer" editorial relationship provides an important foundation to the blog, improving the tone and quality of the writing and benefiting the sound studies community itself.

Hosting, of course, does not mean the material is presented "as is." Quite the opposite. We work extensively with our guest writers to help them develop their ideas and address questions they may not have considered. Associate Professor Marci McMahon, for example, muses about the editorial process: "This was actually much tougher than writing a standard scholarly

journal article. The editorial process is rigorous and the expectation to write a smart, pithy, and clearly understandable piece in 1,500 words is not easy to do. The editorial staff is tough and demands a lot from your work!" Contrary to academic journals, we do not expect "finished" essays the first time around, and we tell our writers their drafts will go through at least two rounds of edits, the first of which will be developmental.

In addition, we are open to unsolicited contributions and have a very low rejection rate, something we take much pride in, especially given how many respondents remarked on our quality and high standards. Sometimes our editorial collective will reach out to writers for posts, and other times writers will pitch an idea to us to see if we would be interested in the full draft. Once assigned to a project, a member of our editorial collective reaches out to the writer, making themself available for questions, pitches, and quick reads of difficult passages. Our guidelines explicitly ask for a first rather than a final draft, enabling writers to send early idea-driven versions that open up possibilities for dialogue between writers and editors in successive drafts. Rather than issuing global comments about a piece and then leaving the writer to decode them in solitude, *Sounding Out!* editors use Word or Google Docs to leave in-text notes that writers respond to directly, another form of community by microintervention: we are asking questions, recommending sources, leaving observations inspired by the draft, suggesting other scholars to contact, sending relevant links, explaining why we made a particular change, making connections to their own work, commending a particular point or turn of phrase and pushing for more. Dropping in jokes, emoticons, and emojis along the way, we're finding unique ways, in context, to imagine and discuss the next iteration of the post. Using the "track changes" function, editors also make grammatical, syntactical, and organizational changes directly to the text, carefully sculpting the piece's rhetorical flow and helping writers make new connections. Writers often work with multiple editors—one or more for each draft, all working on the piece toward the goal of publication—widening the margin-note conversation beyond narrow notions of expertise and ensuring each post will speak to multiple audiences. Jennifer often pairs graduate students and early-career scholars with editors in their field whom they have not yet met, so that they leave the editorial process with a new connection and a short-term working relationship that may lead to future information sharing and collaboration. The pleasure of meeting new people and strengthening network bonds is a key part of our model. Where magazines and other for-profit journals offer money, we offer community and connections—and therefore rigor and

accountability. Writers and editors are thus accountable to each other and each has a stake in a piece's successful publication.

Our survey respondents agreed that the editorial process is long, and those who have published in traditional academic journals often compare the process with peer review—the result being that *Sounding Out!* always emerges as more detail-oriented and exacting. However, they don't see this as a negative thing. One of our writers, a PhD candidate, described the process as "a little too hands-on," but most of the other responses saw the process as essential to their pieces. A graduate student when he worked with us (now a PhD and writing center director), Airek Beauchamp states, "The editorial process was rigorous and ultimately transformative, in the best possible way." Peña Ovalle mentions that "the editorial process is exemplary. Thanks to the incredible feedback, my work was pushed and polished in a way that exceeds the standards of many traditional scholarly print publications." This is not to say that editors at academic journals are not careful or detailed; however, we acknowledge that developmental editing is time consuming and "inefficient"; most scholarly journals cannot find enough willing editors of this stripe with field expertise, particularly with dwindling budgets. And, certainly, both editors and writers must constantly balance *Sounding Out!*'s pleasures with the knowledge that our unpaid work may likely go unsung and uncredited by our institutions and supervisors.

However, our guest bloggers find our process pleasant and helpful, and they notice that we do, too.[24] While our labor remains "free," it is also freely given—and we strive to ensure the relationships we build give back. In contrast to how some authors may describe working with an editor as grueling, our writers for the most part enjoy working side by side with their editors. For example, PhD candidate Enongo Lumumba-Kasongo states, "I have thoroughly enjoyed the editorial process. Aaron [Trammell] has been nothing but professional, timely, forgiving, and very thoughtful in his critiques and suggestions." This emotional connection helps establish *Sounding Out!* as a community, bringing writers back to write for us again and again. Ceraso articulates the connection: "From the start, I felt that [Jennifer Stoever] genuinely cared about each contribution." Our process has been especially helpful in increasing international communication in the field. Finnish PhD student Kal Ahlsved responds, "Since English is not my first language I am very thankful for the editorial patience. I really learned a lot about how to hold a thought and to follow a stream of thought." In addition to enjoying the editorial team's field knowledge and writing skill, writers notice—and respond positively to—the "patience," "enthusiasm," and, as

Lumumba-Kasongo puts it, "positive feedback and words of encouragement, something that actually makes a huge difference when being asked to rework something multiple times." To our surprise and delight, several respondents reported being inspired by our editorial praxis in their work in other venues, both on- and off-line.

Our editorial process brings out the "digit" in "digital," as Bratich would say, humanizing our community and making it feel realized rather than "imagined." The guest writers who responded to our survey do not see *Sounding Out!* as a gate that keeps them out of sound studies, but as representative of a group of people who are interested in developing their ideas, helping the quality of their writing and recording (our podcasters also go through this editorial process), and amplifying their work throughout our networks. We work hard to ensure that our writers—particularly junior faculty, graduate students, community workers, and artists—have a chance to share their ideas with a broader scholarly community, exciting new ideas that otherwise might have been rejected from traditional academic journals and set aside, perhaps forever. Because scholars burn out when they go unheard, we perform the emotional care-work of supporting our colleagues who stand at the margins of academia.

PRESENCE/PRESENT/IMMEDIATE: Social Media and Microinterventions

Building from our personal editorial relationship with writers, our social media presence has been integral to creating the kind of "big tent" sound studies readership we imagined for *Sounding Out!*, while potentially reaching people outside of academia like those in the art world, the sonic professions, and the friends and family of *Sounding Out!*'s blogging crew. As we discovered early on, merely placing information on the web does not build community in and of itself. To encourage a cross-platform community centered around but ultimately reaching beyond the "mothership," we worked hard to craft a distinct purpose for each social media outlet, a move that also enabled all members of the editorial collective to curate their own unique, but connected conversations. In other words, our Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr feeds are not adjacent to the blog; they *are SO!*

While our social media presence seems *Sounding Out!*'s most readily apparent community-building enterprise, the path toward a functional, connected network has been anything but clear. Each medium—WordPress, Twitter, Facebook, iTunes, Tumblr, Google Plus, Reddit, and a monthly

FIGURE 4.8 A greyscale version of the *SO!* logo (created by artist Dan Torres), which is emblazoned across all our platforms.

emailer that goes out to more than 1,100 subscribers—has its own conventions, protocols, and even audiences, and it took much brainstorming, trial, and error, to discover how to reach out effectively. Our respondents underscored this point as they shared how they connect with us on many social media platforms. As we played around with different social media profiles, *Sounding Out!* held fast to two main concerns: legibility and accessibility. We wanted to ensure that interested parties at each access point in *Sounding Out!*'s constellation of social media would immediately recognize our "digits" at work yet would also find unique information and conversations there. Such diffusion, we felt, would enable more mobility for the sound studies community—not being housed or affiliated with any one virtual location—and offer an increasingly diverse range of ways for interested parties to feel connected, share information, join conversations, reach out to each other, and spread the word through shares, likes, retweets, reblogs, "+1s," and up-arrows.

According to our respondents, Twitter is the platform where we make the most sound waves outside of WordPress. Inspired by Liana's microblogging as @Literarychica, Jennifer took on Twitter about a year after *Sounding Out!*'s founding, and she has steadily cultivated a feed of artists, scholars, presses, archives, organizations, programs, digital humanists, and public figures, a diverse well from which to retweet calls for papers and sound-related news, articles, events, releases, job listings, and media clips to *Sounding Out!*'s 5,415 Twitter followers (as of January 2018). Twitter folks can also subscribe to the curated list of more than five hundred "soundtweeps" to tap immediately into a more concentrated conversation regarding audio culture. Jennifer also regularly livetweets conferences, talks, speeches, art openings, and other cultural events of interest to *Sounding Out!* followers and passes on information gleaned in her own research in the field. Followers use the @soundingoutblog handle to ask Jennifer

FIGURE 4.9 *SO!* contributor Steph Ceraso spotted repping the blog by fellow *SO!* writer and recent PhD Tara Betts at the Feminism and Rhetoric conference in January 2014.

questions, crowdsource problems, pitch a post idea, seek knowledgeable parties, and share their own news and interesting web clippings for *Sounding Out!* to retweet.

These exchanges make a difference. Lumumba-Kasongo, for example, describes "a number of positive exchanges with other individuals who have learned about my research interests through tweets that were sent from *Sounding Out!*," including a moment when we mentioned his "piece on audio games to someone on Twitter who mentioned an interest in sound and games, and we ended up having a nice dialogue about some of my discussion points." The flow of conversation moves outward and in unpredictable ways. Jennifer frequently interacts with followers by asking questions, seeking writers, commending observations, asking for collaborations, engaging with memes and hashtags, cracking jokes, and calling out misinformation and/or bad practice. Finally, she regularly updates followers on *Sounding Out!*'s writer-related news like graduations, publications, promotions, performances, and travels, personalizing the community and building affinities within and without the always-expanding Team *Sounding Out!* There is some content crossover for the 3,935 (as of January 2018) folks who have liked our Facebook page, but with an increased emphasis on providing an archive of sound studies CFPs through Facebook's "notes" feature; images and lengthier informal updates from relevant conferences *Sounding Out!*

editors attend; and a community-building photo series that encourages readers to send in images of *so!* stickers—paid for by us and distributed for free—that they spot around the globe.

Writers, Readers, Sharers

Our work at *Sounding Out!* is not limited to hosting content and tweeting news; we are always thinking of our readers as well. Indeed, many of our guest writers are regular readers of *Sounding Out!* and feel a long-term stake in the blog even after the editorial process ends. Many of our writers confessed that they continued to read the blog on a regular basis after their work was featured. Wanda Alarcón, a PhD candidate when she took our survey, describes herself as "reader, guest contributor, fan." The use of the word "fan" in this instance points to admiration of the blog and pleasure in reading it on a regular basis. Ahlsved mentions that he reads the blog regularly and that he often shares relevant pieces with his peers. Sterne says he "looks forward to reading it every Monday morning," referring to our first post of the week. Assistant Professor Jentery Sayers also admits to being "an avid reader." The regular but measured pace of the blog helps readers keep up with the content, with one or two new pieces a week and a podcast per month. However, the content reigns supreme; because the writers know how much care goes into each post, they are assured that every post is a well-written addition to the field.

The fact that writers continue reading, sharing, and interacting with the blog—be it through likes, comments, contributions to our annual Blog-o-Versary mixtape, or sporting a sticker or button—shows that they feel invested in the community of the blog. Readership is not a passive exercise but in fact supports the scholarship of other scholars. When asked to describe the best part of being involved in *Sounding Out!* over the past five years, Soundbox cofounder and Duke PhD candidate Mary Caton Lingold says that it has been "getting to know scholars from other institutions and being able to share work and ideas with them." Drury reiterates this feeling: "I have found it useful to learn about the work others are doing in the field." Bill Kirkpatrick, associate professor, sums up these ideas nicely, admitting, "The best part has been feeling like part of a community of scholars. I appreciated being invited to participate, and I like reading what others have to say." The responses indicate that reading is a way of enacting scholarly citizenship as well as keeping up with what's going on in *Sounding Out!*

Although pressures from the job market and tight tenure clocks demand

FIGURE 4.10 Every July we commemorate our first post by producing an annual collective mixtape with song suggestions from the year's contributors. Logo for our tenth-anniversary mix by Jennifer Stoever and Aaron Trammell.

an ethic of writing from us as scholars, it is important to remember that reading is an integral part of the community loop. Good scholarship means writing *and* reading, and even sometimes writing an addendum in the comments about the post. The ethic of readership and participation fostered by *Sounding Out!* is, in fact, a solution to the manifold academic predicaments that have become readily apparent in the past thirty years. If we are to survive *as a profession*, we must rise to meet the demands and opportunities of today's new media platforms. As Clay Shirky articulates, "Media is a triathlon; it's three different events. People like to consume, but they like to produce, and they like to share."[25] We must become participants who read, write, and offer timely feedback to others in the field on a regular basis.

Conclusion

So in the end, you probably don't need to read between these lines to know we also do it for love.

And, in a sense, love is the affect that has sustained *Sounding Out!* and its affiliated network for the past five years. As social theorist Michael Hardt suggests, although the production of value from affect is often exploited by patriarchal and capitalist institutional forms, there exists a tremendous potential for affective labor to subvert dominant institutional configurations.[26] To this point, our firsthand experience and survey data show a thriving digital community that is paradoxically treated with apathy by the

Jennifer Stoever
i think we also don't find what we do taxing because the three of us have ALWAYS KNOWN we were gonna have to hustle. it was zero surprise.

Liana M. Silva
agreed. because #noprivilegehere

Aaron Trammell
Yeah.
Exactly. #cradletothegrave

Liana M. Silva
#cradletothegrave #nojoke

Jennifer Stoever
#24 #365
oops forgot #7

Aaron Trammell
Hey, we get a vacation this year!

Jennifer Stoever
although my weeks feel 10 days long

Aaron Trammell
#358

Jennifer Stoever

Liana M. Silva
358 lol!

FIGURE 4.11 Discussing our feelings about the tensions of love and labor as first-generation college students and "nontraditional" scholars in academia, marginalized by various intersections of race, gender, and class.

bureaucrats and administrators with whom we work. What goes unsaid, underappreciated, and seemingly unrecognized by these same bureaucrats and administrators is the digital network infrastructure that sustains our community of practice as sound studies scholars.

Furthermore, as the field of sound studies inevitably institutionalizes, it will be all the more important to have a vehicle that amplifies the granularity of the field and wards off status-quo normalization with increasingly radical linkages, particularly between the humanities and the sciences. But whether located in a department or dispersed across the disciplines, the sound studies that *Sounding Out!* will continue to work toward is civically engaged, participatory, increasingly transnational in scope, decolonial in theory and epistemology, and invested in applied knowledge and praxis-as-intervention. We don't want just to change the field, we want the field to change the world. We are betting on the form of the blog to do just that.

Although we find this infrastructure fundamental to our scholarly mission and our livelihood as public academics, the intellectual value produced from our collective labor is diverted into traditional publishing endeavors such as print journals and books. Far from denigrating the value of these traditional forms, we aim here to locate a problematic in what is valued by the institutions for which we work and to suggest that the mostly uncompensated affective labor of blogging is "more than just a print journal extension" or a "compromise technology"—two modes Ashley Dawson rightly critiques—and it must be recognized if the imbalance of today's academic publishing industry will ever be rectified.[27] So even though we did it for love, our digital publishing honeymoon is over.

We will continue to "sound out" the invisible lines of practice that constitute our site and other rigorous digital publications. Digital platforms—conjured into existence by a need for connection and the immediacy of scholarship on topics at hand—must be seen for what they are: the new configuration of the academy. And, as such, the work of editing (developing scholarship *and* community) must come to be valued by our institutions as much as the act of writing. There must be a recognition that reliability and trust stem from rigorous editorial processes as much as they do prestigious titles. And, perhaps most fundamentally, the microinterventions (tweeting, retweeting, linking, soliciting, challenging, and connecting) necessary to running a successful publication must be recognized as valuable labor in this new network and compensated with pay, positions, and prestige.

Sounding Out! continues to reward both us and the community, and this sustained sense of pleasurable community contact keeps us engaged on a

fundamental level. We believe in the community effort that has both constructed and supported us, and we are proud to have seen terms such as "reader," "fan," and "inspiration" repeated in the survey results. We're in this together, and we must start the process of recognition by collectively—and loudly—revealing to our friends, colleagues, bosses, advisors, deans, provosts, and interested peers the affective labor practices that constitute our network, so that they can build awareness in turn about how much damn work goes into digital publishing.

And we must start by making more mixtapes. Always more mixtapes.

NOTES

1 These three categories represent the varied positions of the editorial collective at the time of writing. Over the course of the blog's existence, Jennifer has become tenured, while both Liana and Aaron have finished their dissertations. Aaron has successfully completed a postdoctorate and obtained a tenure-track job, and Liana has served as editor of *Women in Higher Education*, as well as being a freelance writer and editor. She is now a secondary school educator.

2 This is, in fact, what happened in Jennifer's otherwise successful tenure case. Although she provided extensive materials documenting the formation, growth, and impact of *Sounding Out!* (with extensive digital examples), and her supportive department took the proactive step of procuring an outside evaluator strictly for her digital scholarship—whose letter commented very rigorously and favorably on *SO!*—the evaluating dean undermined these efforts and her digital labor by describing "the blogspot *Sounding Out!*" as "a valuable service to our academic community" and therefore only an indirect contribution toward her "multifaceted" case for tenure. These were all concerns raised at the 2013 Modern Language Association workshop on digital scholarship and tenure, where Jennifer and *Sounding Out!* were selected as case studies to help scholars and administrators think through blogging and tenure. A panel at the 2014 annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians focused on precisely this question, featuring five different historical bloggers who addressed whether they considered their blogs scholarship. Points of view were mixed.

3 cummings, "since feeling is first," *Selected Poems*, 99.

4 We use "counternarrative" here to signal our intellectual solidarity with critical race studies methodology, in which researchers use storytelling methods to legitimate the extensive experiential knowledge of marginalized peoples and center conversations about race and power sublimated by dominant nar-

ratives. Also, as Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso argue, the term "offer[s] a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination" (24).

5 As of July 12, 2016, *Sounding Out!* was one of seventy-seven publications that were available only online and had no pagination.

6 Drobnik, *Aural Cultures*, 10. See also Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa;* Johnson, *Listening in Paris;* and Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat,* on avant garde art and radio. See Kun on American literary and musical audiotopias (*Audiotopia*); Moten on the black radical tradition (*In the Break*); Picker on nineteenth-century sound (*Victorian Soundscapes*); Trevor Pinch and Frank Trocco on the synthesizer (*Analog Days*); Rath on early American soundscapes (*How Early America Sounded*); Bruce Smith on Shakespeare (*Acoustic World of Early Modern England*); Sterne on nineteenth-century audio technologies (*Audible Past*); Thompson on modernity and architecture (*Soundscape of Modernity*). A handful of formative anthologies were released in 2004: Bull and Back, *Auditory Culture Reader;* Erlmann, *Hearing Cultures;* Mark Smith, *Hearing History;* Drobnik, *Aural Cultures;* and Cox and Warner, *Audio Culture.*

7 For more on the methodology of a field in transition, see Hilmes's "Is There a Field Called Sound Culture Studies?"

8 Williams, "Community," 75.

9 Bratich, "The Digital Touch," 307.

10 Sundén, "Technologies of Feeling," 147.

11 Sample, "What's Wrong with Writing Essays?"

12 Boon, "One Nation."

13 In particular, the Sound Studies Caucus in the American Studies Association, the Sound Studies and Radio Studies Special Interest Groups in the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, the Music and Sound Interest Group in the American Anthropology Association, and the Sound Studies Interest Group in the Society of Ethnomusicology have been key foundational professional groups. In 2012 and 2014 *Sounding Out!* cohosted "meet and greets" with the Sound Studies Caucus at the American Studies Association annual conference.

14 There is now a dedicated print journal, *Sound Studies,* whose first issue was published in 2015. Jennifer is on the founding editorial board, no doubt due at least in part to her work on *Sounding Out!*

15 This is a problem in the digital humanities in general, as McPherson addresses in "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?"

16 Even with recent compromise measures such as the inclusion of a CD at the end of a text or sound clips on an online "tie-in" site, written pieces have largely had to stand alone, without a sonic dimension, however necessary it might be to the analysis performed. Referring to these sounds is like referring to a text absent from the bibliography.

17 "I could actually have audible examples to accompany my analysis" says one respondent to our survey. "When writing my guest posts I could think/write

along with audio/video samples in mind simply because I knew that it was possible and also because it was the expectation," says another.

18 See Cohen's "The Blessay" for a distillation of this debate, particularly concerning writing at the intersection of journalism and scholarship.

19 We take the term "always on" from boyd's "Participating in the Always-On Lifestyle," in which she discusses the pleasures of staying connected and suggests hacks to make an "always-on" existence less taxing. As she argues, "There's nothing like being connected and balanced to make me feel alive and in love with the world at large" (74). We agree.

20 O'Reilly, "What Is Web 2.0?," 41.

21 Sundén, "Technologies of Feeling."

22 See Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 3–4.

23 Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, 43. See our full editorial statement online at http://soundstudiesblog.com/editorial-statemen, and our mission statement at http://soundstudiesblog.com/sound-studies-blog/mission.

24 Taken from our survey.

25 Shirky, "Gin, Television," 239.

26 Hardt, "Affective Labor," 100.

27 Dawson, "D.I.Y. Academy?," 261, 271.

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