

0:00 Olivia: CAMPP Fire Stories is a documentation of the work of members of the Collective to Advance Multimodal Participatory Publishing, or CAMPP, at the end of a three year incubation period at the University of Colorado Boulder. CAMPP's mission promotes faculty and student curation, cultivation, co-creation, and publication of knowledge. Under this umbrella, members developed and published various projects that meet academic standards and are open and accessible to the community at large. These audio recordings contain first hand accounts from CAMPP and community members about their projects and their experiences throughout this period of development.

0:37 Catherine: In this episode, we hear from Jay Ellis and Charlotte Whitney on Their work on student-run creative nonfiction literary journal, Hindsight. Jay Ellis is the Program for Writing and Rhetoric's Faculty Advisor for Hindsight Creative Nonfiction, and the forthcoming new title from the Journal staff, Changing Skies: Writing on the Climate Crisis. Charlotte Whitney is a sophomore studying English Literature with minors in Political Science and German. She's been on the staff of Hindsight since Spring of 2021 and is this semester's Editor in Chief.

1:14 Catherine: So first I want to thank you both for joining, Jay and Charlotte, what we are doing here is we are documenting members of CAMPP and their journey over the last three years. So we thought we would start that by asking Jay, how did CAMPP begin for you?

1:32 Jay: I remember a call for proposals and money and time and space. Those were my hopes for the journal you know to get it on better infrastructure as they say and yeah it was, you know, it was an exciting possibility to try and get some space for the journal to operate in and course release so that I have time and money to pay for things you know. So that was kind of it and Mark Warner you know I knew him from way back and so that's kind of how I got in.

2:17 Catherine: All right so then, for the both of you when you set off on your journeys with the Hindsight Journal in particular, what were you expecting?

2:28 Jay: Well Charlotte can talk about the transition to Hindsight because Hindsight has a nine year legacy before it as Journal 2020. And Journal 2020 came out of one class that I was teaching, Introduction to Writing Creative Nonfiction. It's actually a lower division course with the serendipitous course number of two zero two zero you see where this is going so WRTG two zero two zero is a course we only get one section of even though students clamor for more and they actually want, you know, more writing classes. And I had taught it before because we only get one section we rotate in and out of that course, so Eric Burger and some other people in the program for writing and rhetoric, Kerry Reilly who went to the famous Iowa writers workshop and so on. Eric also has an MFA, mostly MFA people unlike myself, I ended up with a PhD in American lit but I'm a writer and so we writers were interested in teaching a writing course that got more on the creative side of things but stayed on the nonfiction side. And the particular course that I was teaching in fall of twenty twelve I struck gold. I mean you know, always all my writing classes have some students that produce some amazing work but that one was incredible. And so we decided to create a journal and we did! It was all volunteer work. The following semester we were like pirates we were unaligned unapproved no proposals no you

know we just did it, and got some money from the Program for Writing and Rhetoric, and some money from Susan Kirk and her husband Dick and that went through Center of the American West and that's how we printed up enough copies to hand them to all kinds of people across CU and it took off from there including the president of CU back then, Bruce Benson.

4:38 Charlotte: Yeah and I guess on the Hindsight side of things, I joined only a year ago by recommendation of a random writing class that I took. Professor McDonald told me, you know, check out this journal you might really enjoy it and I really didn't expect much, I actually thought that I would be more on the editorial side of things like reading the stories that would end up getting published. And I kind of just fell headfirst into kind of the mess, the beautiful mess that is publishing student work, and I ended up getting more involved in the artistic rebranding of the journal from Journal 2020 to Hindsight, so I wasn't really involved in you know the very beginnings of the journal as just a concept for publishing student work, but when it comes to the journal that that exists now, Hindsight, I've been there from the very beginning and it's been yeah it's been kind of strange watching everything grow and growing with it. It's pretty cool.

5:49 Jay: The student work is the beautiful part and the mess is the publishing but you know they have fun doing that too and they learn a lot of a lot of things that turn up in life that they don't necessarily encounter at CU as students.

6:03 Catherine: So how does the journal relate to CAMPP specifically?

6:09 Jay: CAMPP being about publishing and student publishing and multimodal I guess because we're online as well as in print. More and more literary journals are retreating to online only but we do both and yeah so I guess that's how it fits under CAMPP.

6:30 Catherine: How does Hindsight Journal differ from other journals of CU?

6:35 Charlotte: Yeah I can take that. I'm pretty intimately familiar with the other journals at CU because I do some writing of my own and as a staff member I, you know, explore the other ways for me to publish my own writing. Obviously there's a conflict of interest in, you know, publishing my writing in Hindsight so the other journals on campus, the Honors Journal and Walkabout and, I believe there may be one more but I'm forgetting the name, they're more rooted in like just general publishing of work. So, Honors Journal publishes work from honor students, I'm sure that people on the staff of the Honors Journal could give you a better description of what they do, but Hindsight is more rooted in specifically the creative nonfiction tradition and also art. And what Jay likes to say is creative nonfiction is true stories told creatively so it's a pretty large umbrella term capturing a lot of different genres but the emphasis is that the stories that we're publishing are rooted in truth and they're not fiction and they're not made up. And then art fits into that in terms of the fact that art is usually you know creative re-visualization of reality especially in photography and so then pairing those together kind of combines creativity and reality in one journal.

8:15 Catherine: So that kind of covers one of the other questions that I had. Do either of you want to talk about why you chose non fiction in particular or was that mostly it?

8:25 Charlotte: I mean I wasn't there when it was created so if you wanna take that one go ahead.

8:32 Jay: Well you know it's funny wanting to have some creative writing classes. Back in the aughts when the program for writing and rhetoric was growing and we ran a survey and students said they wanted more writing classes more elective classes from us, we didn't have any at the time we just had the required lower division writing and rhetoric course and upper division writing and rhetoric, that was it. And we didn't wanna get into the turf of English and their whole creative writing program or creative writing, I don't know, division of the department were not part of english. And in fact I was hired along with nine other people or eight other people to sort of create the program for writing and rhetoric along with the very good people, many of, more than nine, who were already on from the old writing program when it left English. And that's just a historical thing that's kind of happened across campuses in the United States certainly so nonfiction sort of fit more with rhetoric as in the program for writing and, and you know how to teach argument and things like that, great fiction, great poems maybe shouldn't make an argument so much but you know hit you over the head but creative nonfiction includes all kinds of things like lyric essay, poetry, as long as not too much is not made up, right? And so that fit more naturally I suppose with the program for writing and rhetoric's sort of overall mission of teaching students how to write scholarly work and there is creative nonfiction scholarship, I've published some myself I'd like to think it qualifies as creative, and yeah again you know when we were starting out at the time not kind of getting into the toes or onto the toes or into the turf of english teaching straight up creative writing per se. Beyond that I think it's a genre that just won't go away for all kinds of reasons and I've written about this I ended up editing a book called American Creative Nonfiction and the forward, the introduction, and the chapters that I contributed have to do with this American, particularly American obsession with true stories, true crime, based on a true story, you know and we're always fascinated by that. There's an understandable reason why the Cohen brothers are really wonderful at yanking everybody's chain with that you know based on a true story and you know better than to trust them you know but the general genre of creative nonfiction publishing as as certainly as I see it, and I've written about this, should not feel free to completely and totally fabricate things. That's wonderful that's what I try to publish, I write novels and poems and short stories where I make things up but students have stories to tell and they have other people's stories to tell, and while there's a wonderful creative way to do that where you don't worry about whether or not you're remembering it correctly and you don't worry about whether or not it's truth we also as a culture and a country have lived through truths and alternative facts and you know some rather dismaying looseness around the notion of truth and objectivity and so on. So some of us really care about the nonfiction part of creative nonfiction as being a meaningful way of getting at ideas and feelings and all the things that that other types of creativity can get at but also with that toe rather firmly in the land of not making stuff up and and back checking.

12:44 Catherine: What was it like to publish as a part of a collaborative team?

12:49 Charlotte: I think the most striking realization that I came to pretty early on since being on staff is that it's really like a fine tuned machine that sometimes operates very in a not very fine tuned way. So that's kind of a roundabout description but I think it's kind of crazy, that the process is very chaotic, but there's a method to it and ultimately you can't not do the work because what results is a printed physical copy of a journal. So the process for example of like coming up with a new cover is kind of like madness you're compiling so many different reference pictures and looking into archives for pictures of student art that you can maybe use in the in the cover and it's a pretty hectic process but in that process everyone's getting to add their own you know aesthetic sensitivities or their backgrounds that will create like a more cohesive idea as a whole, and so then in this crazy mad scientist board that you have with all of this inspiration you end up with a finished product because there's a deadline and also because everyone's kind of making everyone else have new ideas but also holding each other accountable. And I think that's definitely come out more in the spring semesters where we're really kind of it's crunch time to publish the actual journal and we're compiling everything in our processing software and everything else and you really get this sense of like everyone working together and something that is always important is integrating everyone in the process, because even if people are all involved in different parts of the journal being published we're all a collective staff and need to feel that way so I think that's the most I don't know it's the most kind of palpable like evidence of of a collective effort in the journal.

15:02 Jay: It sounds fun. I hope it's fun for you guys.

15:04 Charlotte: It's definitely fun.

15:06 Jay: It's you know we scared people off before you know students who show up and they just they it's just too strange and different for them but it arguably is a whole lot more the way real life works, especially if you have a fun job, an interesting job, you don't want a job where you are told exactly what to do and how to do it and with not much you know leeway not much room for creativity. And yet that creativity yeah I mean there are practical things, you got deadlines, you got column inches, you have how many words can you fit in this space where where does this art go, you have very practical considerations things that certainly back before technology changed so rapidly even while we've been producing the journal make a big difference in cost. We used to have to pay twenty five cents a pop for every page that had any color on it and ten cents for a page that didn't have color on it, so think about that affecting your aesthetic decisions and the group weighing in on that and asking the art director to mind the budget and so on, and now thankfully we don't have to worry about that, a page is a page is a page because the technology changed. But yeah deadlines are deadlines and you gotta get to the printer by a certain date if you're gonna have your event and you're gonna have books in people's hands.

16:28 Catherine: Where is your endpoint right now, and where will the journey take you next?

16:34 Charlotte: I don't know about an endpoint, I think that's not something I ever really consider, I think the only end point in my mind is like when we have to get the journal to print. Beyond that I can't think too far into the future. I'm only a sophomore and I'm editor in chief this semester so my involvement in the journal has grown very quickly over the last year, and I know that there is a lot that I still want to do with the journal but also considerations that I have to do with my own graduation timeline so my time with the journal might come to a close within a semester or two, which makes me really sad to think about as I've watched it grow as quickly as I have but right now what I,

17:29 Jay: You can't leave, you have to come, you have to come back then.

17:33 Charlotte: That's true but right now what I do, what I am excited about is something we talk about a lot in class in our practicum where we published the journal, which is trying to grow and be a more national journal so actually starting to take submissions not just from CU students but also from people across college campuses in America, or not even college students, not even America, like there are a lot of different heights that the journal can be taken to and we're already starting to get art submissions from people outside of the CU community which is a really exciting thing to see. So that's kind of like a really long term, like in the next couple of years, even beyond my graduation from CU, watching the journal grow as not just based in the institution but also abroad would be like a really exciting thing to see.

18:30 Jay: Yeah and Charlotte we'll understand if you have to leave us for a little while but please come back, it was wonderful to be reminded and surprised every time I realize it. We love our freshmen and sophomore staffers but my god I can't believe you're a sophomore, I keep thinking you're a junior, we only got another year for you, but yeah. I mean the only endpoint is death really, right I mean you know, so everything else is a temporary deadline and we do deadlines, we definitely do deadlines, and we were going- Charlotte did an excellent job of herding the cats as we sometimes say, you know, of trying to get the chaotic wonderful creative exciting energy of the practicum course, because that's one of the ways we produce the journal is a course, but then we also have interns, and we have volunteers, and we have all these crazy ways we produce this thing. But we'd like to get into one room at the same time you know a couple of times a week when we can and we've got that this semester and Charlotte was running down the calendar and just this semester we are trying to launch, we know better than to promise we will succeed but we could fail beautifully and then succeed more in the fall, two journals, two titles so not only Hindsight but a new title called Changing Skies that focuses on climate change writing, and in any case we already are cranking up a second website for Changing Skies, we will have that live by the end of the semester. We're looking at multiple events for launching print journals one or both: we're going to AWP, the association of writing and writers and writing programs, the largest conference of writers on the planet, and that's where we're really going to be putting our foot forward as Charlotte talked about you know in terms of becoming a national journal, which really means international you know these days, right as soon as you're online you're getting anglophone work from anywhere and everywhere, and then we could start publishing works with on fas translation some journalists do that so we wouldn't be stuck to english only. But yeah so we want to grow today, you know today more

Colorado in the United States and AWP and reaching out into taking submissions from anybody, everybody, and tomorrow the world so yeah, we don't have an endpoint in a way.

20:59 Catherine: How do you plan on becoming more visible in the international or national community?

21:04 Jay: First of all a AWP I mean Charlotte can't go but our managing editor Kaylie Stenberg is gonna go along with Shadia Nagati and Eid, Eid's gonna be there, so we're gonna have students tabling which is very exciting, this is the largest book fair. I mean there are other book fairs that are as big in publishing in the publishing world but they're not sort of really run more by writers and journals more book publishers you know like Berlin book fair and things like that just huge Frankfurt every year but no AWP is going to be a big step and just people walking up and looking at this gorgeous journal. You know, I'm standing by my bookshelf that I often gesture to when I'm doing stuff on Zoom with the journal staff, of all these journals I subscribe to, everything from North American Review to Paris Review to you know a lot of reviews you know, and ours really looks different and better, more art, beautiful art, more careful aesthetics, the pages aren't crammed with words- we love words, but we love to give them space, so we think we're going to find a lot of people wanting to submit to us and then eventually get on subscriptions, we got to figure out how that works and all. There are also other ways that I can get into that you know, once we publicize on something like Poets and Writers, Submittable, more actively a thing called Duotrope Online, these are websites that writers know, and we're going to get flooded with submissions we're gonna need our editors to have chest waders to get through the slush.

22:56 Charlotte: And an exciting I guess a way to spread out like recognition on the side of like this more student side is I'm really looking forward to being able to tell people that I meet that aren't necessarily CU students to yeah publish art and writing to our journal even if you're not a part of like the Buff community you can still you know find a way to get published. And I think it's really awesome when I have friends or I myself get published in other universities' journals and it's a pretty cool experience to be able to get, feel integrated in a community of writers rather than just a community of specific college students, and I think that would be a really good opportunity to give other people too.

23:50 Catherine: So then can you talk about Changing Skies, and how you want that to work alongside Hindsight Journal?

24:01 Jay: Sure. Well Changing Skies came about because of Scott King. Scott King is a CU alum, he graduated a double E major, and went and founded companies and sold companies, sold enough companies that he's no longer having to deal with companies anymore. He's retired and wanting to give back you know for a number of good, understandable reasons and interesting story reasons. I think Charlotte I was thinking you know, he wouldn't ask us to do this, but we could have a little something on him in Changing Skies because it's an interesting story, you know? Guy buys a Tesla starts thinking about how it could recharge his house instead of the other way around right, then daughter says "I don't want to have children in this world"

you know and so Scott is on a mission and founded this umbrella organization called Mission Zero to really help CU students fight climate change, and he wants that to go national and international he wants CU, which it rightly should be, to be even more at the forefront than it already is in terms of fighting climate change. You think about all the government and NGOs and things that are associated with CU that aren't CU that have buildings here because of CU, NIST, NOAA, NCAR, series can go on you know and people who study climate in the Boulder area right, and those people are aligned with CU and outside of CU and overlapping with CU et cetera. And so I think Scott's picked a wonderful place and it's his alma mater, he's a Buff, and he wants these students to do everything from robotics projects that they're working on for how robotic cars could scurry around and plug into things and not only recharge but dump their electricity into buildings back and forth etc. So that's one of the projects he's funded, so he's funding all these things and he wants to fund students writing about climate change, and not just the terrible trauma about of climate change but we certainly have that with the firestorm winds this year et cetera, but you know what do they care about and and what are they hopeful for, you know and how can they help change things and make things better.

26:37 Catherine: All right we're turning to sort of more CAMPP stuff and Hindsight stuff. What would you guys say is your favorite part of the work that you've done so far?

26:49 Charlotte: I think my favorite part has definitely been getting to see the other side of just the world of writing, and specifically getting to see it physically take form. So when I joined staff everything was still very much remote, the practicum course was online and we had physical copies of the journal at the end of everything, but we didn't have a launch at the Boulder Bookstore like we have in years prior. And I felt a little bit kind of disconnected from the process, like yes I know intellectually I'm brainstorming with my fellow staffers to create something new, but I'm not getting to see that happen. Now that we're in a designated physical space together and also now that I've been able to spend several semesters with the journal I can kind of see the cyclical or maybe just kind of self fulfilling like circle that exists in this publishing world, where the beginning of the semester we were tabling at the Be Involved Fair and we didn't have like barely any writing and we needed an all new staff pretty much and all of a sudden we got a bunch of new staff members got in a bunch of new submissions and kind of started building everything from the ground up. And then getting to interact with everyone in a physical space this semester has just been crazy to actually put you know voices and like heights to people's faces and actually being able to you know stand up and sit next to the person that I'm trying to work with rather than getting into a breakout room in our disparate bedroom. So I think just being able to watch both the journal grow and also the more interpersonal component of publishing the journal watching that become more significant as the semesters have gone on has been a real joy for me.

28:53 Jay: I'm glad to hear that, you know it is interesting the virtual and the physical. Like I said a lot of journals are retreating to online only because it's so expensive to publish print, we've always cared about print when we debuted we were the only, in twenty thirteen we were the only journal in the country that was in gorgeous print and also only creative nonfiction but also only producing undergraduate writing because we only published undergraduate writing at that time

and all by undergraduate staff. So those four things, that was it, and that's all very physical and putting the physical journal into the hands of Bruce Benson the president of CU at the time and so on, you know the parents loved this thing on their coffee table and in their hands and students like getting a hold of a copy. Charlotte, how long was it before you got your first print copy after we actually had them done from the back from the printer?

29:51 Charlotte: I actually got lucky, I remember I was taking my mom on a tour of campus because I hadn't been on campus all year and just casually we stop by the program for writing and rhetoric like I guess end of April, and I was like oh yeah there's Hindsight right here I'll pick up a copy, this is great, but yeah there's so many people on staff who you know they'll come to class like a week ago and be like "oh I've never actually held a copy of the journal."

30:19 Jay: Wow, we need to send them all to the PWR basement to pick up a copy.

30:22 Charlotte: Yeah.

30:26 Jay: You know but yeah, did you say you were with your mother?

30:29 Charlotte: Yeah, she has one in her little bookshelf.

30:31 Jay: Yeah I bet she displays it proudly right, and you know it's still a prestige thing getting published in print versus online, but we love online too you know it's a weird trade off so we like to do both. But when I get something of mine published online I know there's actually probably going to be more eyes on it you know, nationally, internationally, or whatever, and yet it's more bragging rights, it goes into a different spot on your cv when you're in academia you know that you're published in print. So we want to keep doing both and that's again that's that multimodal that's one one of the ms in CAMPP.

31:09 Catherine: I think that's mostly it for me, do either of you have any finishing statements that you wanna get out before we wrap it up?

31:17 Jay: I'd like Charlotte to get the last word, I'll get the second last word, students do get a lot out of serving on staff. We've had students go on to law school, business, the experience that they get marketing, we've had former staffer- who by the way Charlotte left us a semester or two and then came back and became the managing editor- and then went on to write ad copy for an agency in Denver. We've had at least two students I think go through the MFA program at Columbia in creative nonfiction, now both of them working writers, our former editor-in-chief is going to attend the Denver Publishing Institute this summer and go into publishing. So yeah, students get a lot out of it whether they stay in publishing or writing or not.

32:13 Charlotte: Yeah I definitely echo all of that and then just for me personally it's been quite incredible actually, looking back on the ways that I've changed and how that converges with my time on staff, I kind of joined just on a whim because last year I was a freshman living at home because I didn't want to live in the dorms during COVID, and I felt like you know I really only had

like one close friend, and I enjoyed my classes but I wanted to feel somehow connected to individuals on campus. And that joining the journal even though it was all virtual it was like a really big part of kind of allowing me to understand the ways that I could change in college. Sounds a little bit silly or cliché or whatever but. But kind of just like it was the first time that I was able to do something that I wanted to do, join something that was student run that that I was interested in, and all of a sudden like I was just a staff member a year ago and then last semester I became the art director and now I'm editor in chief. And I think it's just been a really empowering thing for me to see the ways that I can help create something and maybe sharpen my leadership skills and just kind of be part of a team that makes me feel like I'm actually part of a community.

33:45 Catherine: Well thank you so much, thank you, both of you, Charlotte and Jay, thank you for having this interview.