

# Really Specific Stories: Lynn Fisher

Duration: 40:10

## SPEAKERS

Martin Feld, Lynn Fisher

### **Martin Feld** 00:21

Thank you for joining *Really Specific Stories*, Lynn; it's fantastic to have you on the podcast.

### **Lynn Fisher** 00:26

Yeah, thanks for having me!

### **Martin Feld** 00:27

Now, first question, which I ask every single guest on the show, is: how did you first get into podcasts?

### **Lynn Fisher** 00:33

Gosh, I don't really know. I think it kind of happened organically. I think, the thing I remember most is there's a dev podcast called the *ShopTalk* show, which is two just really awesome devs in the community chatting, answering questions. I feel like that was probably the first podcast I got really into. Where I started listening to podcasts a lot is when I really started getting into watching YouTube commentary on movies, like, reviews and Easter-egg videos on, and there, I discovered, actually, an Australian podcast called *The Weekly Planet*. And I used to just watch, listen to their podcast on YouTube, and I was like, 'Gosh, would be nice to listen to this in, just like, an app'. And I think that's when I kind of got into, 'Oh, like, I can use a podcast app', and, 'Oh, here, there's all these amazing podcasts that I can listen to on there', so...

### **Martin Feld** 01:22

And what was it about these early shows that appealed to you particularly?

### **Lynn Fisher** 01:25

Yeah, I think with *ShopTalk* show there is, of course, just uh, the learning aspect of keeping up to date on web technologies and the industry, but I think the thing that really stuck with me (or why I would stick with a podcast) is: I like listening to two friends have a chat. You know, I think, like, those are the type of podcasts I like, where two people, they know each other really well, they have some good banter and back and forth, and they're talking about some niche topic that

they're both really excited about. And I think that that was what really kind of drew me to those two, especially.

**Martin Feld** 01:56

Now, you mentioned in your answer just there that you're into web technologies—taking a step back...

**Lynn Fisher** 02:00

Yeah?

**Martin Feld** 02:01

...how did you get into web technologies and what's the background to your technological interest in general?

**Lynn Fisher** 02:06

Yeah, so I started doing website-design things when I was in high school, so I kind of grew up in the GeoCities/LiveJournal/Myspace era of learning web design. So I was just really into bands and building little websites and learning HTML and CSS, kind of on my own. And then I went to art school, and so I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do. And then once I graduated, I was looking for a job, and a company hired me to do HTML and CSS work just because I kind of had self-taught myself how to do that. And so then, that's how I got into the, like, dev and design industry and just have been building websites ever since.

**Martin Feld** 02:44

And how do you feel when you're working with the Web and HTML? What was it like to learn those languages and interact with this technology?

**Lynn Fisher** 02:53

Yeah, it was cool, I think... so, a friend of mine actually showed me GeoCities, and I remember very distinctly being like, 'You can make websites?!' Like I didn't, I didn't, like, think about the fact that like, yes, there's people that are putting these on the Web, right? And I was like, 'Oh, that's so cool!'—then learning HTML and CSS, kind of building, you know, designing interfaces, custom templates for LiveJournal and like, you know, customising your profile on Myspace. I think it felt a little bit magical, right? Like, there's that kind of discovery of like, 'Oh, I can actually like, change this and make it my own', and like, do cool little tricks. And this kind of, like, open-source community kind of came up inside of LiveJournal of like, sharing tips and tricks, and like, 'Here's the template I built', or, 'Here's like this design trick I have'. And so I think there was a lot of fun, like, community and like, learning, and just feeling creative on the Web was really, really cool.

**Martin Feld** 03:46

And you mentioned open source just there. Can you tell me a little bit about your views on that, what it means to you and your interaction with the Web and others?

**Lynn Fisher** 03:57

Yeah, open source, I think I use, I use that term generally, which is like code or design, things that you've made or put together, and then you just share it publicly for others to use and to, um, use in their own projects—and not just for learning, but for, you know, building off of and sharing again. And so I think, at the root of it, I think it's really cool: this kind of creative, collaborative, open ecosystem of stuff that we've all made, where you can riff off things and make something better, take what someone's done and make it your own. I think that's really cool. Um, of course, open source has grown into kind of a business on the Web, right, with like huge companies, you know, releasing their own open-source frameworks and libraries and folks trying to make whole careers on it and figuring out ways to monetise it and to be paid for their work, which is kind of a tricky situation. But I think at the heart, I really liked that aspect of the Web, where, like, just by nature, your website code is viewable. I thought that was always cool, like 'View Source', that's how I learned a lot of things of how to code and I don't know... I think that that is just a neat part of building websites especially.

**Martin Feld** 05:15

And on that point about participating in the Web and talking to other people, and in that open, collaborative style, I discovered you as a podcast listener through things like Mastodon, found your blog. Can you tell me a little bit about running your site and your blog and how you channel maybe some of your interests or professional work into that sort of passion project or writing what you do?

**Lynn Fisher** 05:39

I have always... I don't know, it's interesting, my website has evolved a lot over the years; I redo it once a year, it's always, it's just kind of a creative outlet for me. I think, having a personal website, I always encourage it, because it's like, especially if you make websites for a living, a lot of the time you're making stuff that you're just not really that interested in; other people are making the decisions, you have to think a lot about, like huge audiences or like your specific user base. And I think with your own site, it's just whatever you want to do! You can be weird and experimental and try, you know, just kind of do whatever you want, write your own little thoughts down.

**Lynn Fisher** 06:15

So I have a website where I write about design and the industry and then I also have, like, a personal blog, that I've been, like a WordPress blog that I've been running for a long time, where I just post little 'inspiratory' kind of things, you know, like, here's a cool product, here's like a fun trip, I went on, here's kind of the day-to-day-type stuff, which is cool. I haven't been doing that as much, but I want to get back into it. And then I also have like a, kind of a handful of, um, one-off—I don't know how to describe them—I guess, side projects, passion projects, but I always call them, like, 'glorified fan sites'. And so, I kind of take a topic that I'm really interested in or that I want to do more research about, and then I just build a website about that thing. So I have like a website that tracks all the stats from the reality cooking show, *Top Chef*...

**Martin Feld** 07:02

Wow...

**Lynn Fisher** 07:03

...and so, or then I have one about *The Good*... the, all the food that they have on the TV show *The Good Place*—a lot of them are movie and TV-show-centred. But yeah, I, like, approach these projects more as, like... I don't know, just, here's this thing I'm excited and passionate about and I assume that there are other people out there that are too, and the Web is such a cool, like, publishing platform that I just want to create something and share it with people.

**Martin Feld** 07:26

And you mentioned food as the things that you're tracking. I'm interested to learn a bit more about that. Why food?

**Lynn Fisher** 07:34

Well, so, on *The Good Place*... have you seen that show? It's a...

**Martin Feld** 07:37

I'm aware of it, yeah, haven't watched much of it, sorry.

**Lynn Fisher** 07:39

No, it's cool, you should! It's a good show. But that show in particular, has a lot of gags that are food-related, like Megan Amram was one of the writers and she would always post that, like, she had, just had this huge document of, like, food puns that they, like, included in the show. There's just tonnes of food puns. And so, that's like a running theme throughout the show. And so, I basically watched the show all the way through and, like, collected all the instances of the food, I drew some illustrations and I created this kind of like fake menu of, like, all the food in *The Good Place*.

**Lynn Fisher** 08:11

And so, I think that that maybe is the theme of my projects: is more that, like, there's like some sort of, like, running pattern happening in shows or movies or industries, that if you're paying attention, you'll see it. And then if someone were to compile all of those, there are certain types of people that would find that interesting, right? So, uh, a couple of years ago, I had a pretty viral project, actually, it's called *Nestflix*. And what it is, is it's like a fake streaming platform for, like, movies in movies, or like TV shows in TV shows. So like in *Home Alone*, the, like, movie that Kevin watches is actually like a fake movie. It just tracks all of those, right? It's like there's a theme within, like, the film industry or whatever that like these like fake movies is kind of like a fun gag or a fun, like Easter-eggy kind of thing, that is like subtle, but like, they're even, like, pulling it out and making... putting way more time into it than anyone would deem, like, reasonable and then making a site about it.

**Martin Feld** 09:08

What stands out to me so far is your great appreciation for media, or layers of media. I love that example that you just said about the movie (or fake movies) within *Home Alone*—that's great. It's one thing to be interested in technology or tracking things and doing stats and making websites, but to have that media appreciation or commenting on it, that's another thing. So, how did you first become aware of media as a thing, or a way of communicating messages or bringing people together or even fan work in the way that you're practising it?

**Lynn Fisher** 09:46

I don't know. I think probably going to art school.

**Martin Feld** 09:50

Mmm...

**Lynn Fisher** 09:51

I think that probably was the original, originator of it, where I mean, a lot of people create art for themselves, right, but I think the whole like crux of, like, going to school for art is this whole, like, you have to like, think about how people are receiving your work and you have to defend it. Like, there's this whole part, like, process of, like, defending your work and talking about it and like this meta commentary like all this like, right, like thinking about the work as it relates to history and, like, the work that comes before it and, like, all of these things. And so, I think that, like, that mindset is probably where that started.

**Lynn Fisher 10:24**

And then I've just always been a fan of movies and TV shows and books and just stories. And I think that with the rise of, like, YouTube and Twitter and people commenting on things, and like, things having kind of this, like, ebb and flow in conversation, and then it becomes, like, conversations about the conversation, right? And there's, someone makes a commentary, and then someone makes a commentary video about that commentary and then just as people, we are always kind of talking. I don't know, I think the, the way that we think about things like evolve over time, right, because of the way that we're like interacting with them. And I think that that's really interesting.

**Lynn Fisher 11:01**

And with the Web, like, the way that we publish that commentary has changed so much, so, I don't know, I think that's probably where it started. And I think wanting to, like, show appreciation for movies and TV shows and the things that I like, right, but in a way that feels creative, that feels appreciative, but also, like, pointing something out that maybe other people could appreciate. That's kind of where I land.

**Martin Feld 11:25**

No, that's great. And it was intriguing how you said, 'conversations about conversations', because right now we're having a conversation about conversations and fan work.

**Lynn Fisher 11:35**

Right?!

**Martin Feld 11:36**

Although, interestingly, a lot of your fan work that you've shared so far, centres on those kind of visual media, like films and television. When you think about podcasting, tell me a little bit about your fan experience or how you've appreciated, or consumed or followed podcasts as an audio medium. What's it been like since those early days or first podcasts that you shared at the beginning of this episode?

**Lynn Fisher 12:01**

I feel like maybe my relationship with podcasts is really—I don't know why—but I think of it a little bit differently, I guess. Or maybe it's because it's audio, it's a little bit harder for me to, like, parse, like, my appreciation into something that, because I'm a visual... I work in visual media, like, it's hard for me to think about it that way. Like, one example I think of, that wasn't me, but that I appreciate, is like on *The Weekly Planet*, that podcast, there's like running jokes that, like, occur, kind of like inside jokes between like, the audience, right, that like kind of recur, and there, people will make, like, just really elaborate, like, movie posters featuring these jokes, and like memes and things. And I think that that form of expression is cool, where it becomes almost like little

communities within, like, when you think about a published podcast, you think of it being like, 'OK, here's the thing, it's there', but because there's like an audience and this, like, they're creating things in reaction to the podcast, it's like, really still alive. It's not like a finished thing until like, the next episode, they might, like, comment on the thing, right? So like, the conversation in the community around it is impacting the work, also, which is an interesting dynamic, which I guess also kind of happens now with television shows, and I guess films too, where, like the conversation around, around that is affecting the people creating the work, right? So that's interesting, but yeah, from my point of view, I think that's something that I haven't really explored with podcasts specifically, but that does kind of get some things in my head going.

**Martin Feld** 13:39

Yeah, and you mentioned the word 'community' there, and there's a whole community, as you said, around podcasts and very much around tech podcasts. What can you tell me about your interaction with that community? What kinds of technology show and people have you discovered over time?

**Lynn Fisher** 13:58

Uh, yeah, I think the dev kind of industry or community, especially like, folks who I kind of fall in the like, the design, front-end, HTML/CSS community, and I think that we are all kind of aware and, like, kind of following each other and especially previously on Twitter, but I'm on Mastodon now, so it's a little bit smaller now, right, like people kind of scattered. But I think we're all kind of like, supporting each other and, like, asking each other questions. I think that's really cool. Like, I think a lot of us will be like following podcasts, listening to each other's work.

**Lynn Fisher** 14:32

I think there's a lot of folks whose, I've listened to their podcasts on and off, you know, depending on topics, like Stephanie Eckles is a developer, who is just brilliant and does a lot of really cool teaching. Her podcast is really about learning. Those communities. There's a couple of, like, Discords I've been in, that, like, communities have formed around these kinds of podcasts, like uh, *Frontend Horse*, which is a—I haven't been in there lately, but—a bunch of developers in the Discord, talking a lot about their ideas they're working on. And so, I think that these little communities kind of pop up around kind of a central person or or group of people that are running the podcast. Um, and that's been really cool. It gets, I think it gets folks excited about stuff where they can ask questions, bounce ideas off each other.

**Martin Feld** 15:16

You mentioned a word, 'learning', there. How have you learnt or what are some of the things that you've learnt, in the process of listening to tech podcasts?

**Lynn Fisher** 15:24

Yeah, I mean, I can't even quantify... I feel like it's like everything! Like, I think, I think the best thing about it is to hear about, like, problems folks are having or things that they're working on that are just really different from what I've been working on. I was mostly working in agencies, like, for most of my career, and so I was working on like, marketing, brochure-type websites, or like, sometimes apps, but I've never worked on a big tech product, really. And so like, that's really interesting to me to learn about, like how those folks are using the same technologies that I'm using, but in different ways.

**Lynn Fisher** 15:58

Because web technologies move so quickly, especially over the last couple of years, like CSS has been, just changing at such a pace that it's hard to keep up. And so those types of episodes especially, where someone like Miriam Suzanne, who works on just the cutting edge, like what's coming out for CSS, right, learning from folks like that, I think, hearing like, 'OK, here's just all the stuff that's coming', and then you can kind of, like, pause, and then do a little googling and researching. And then, I think that that's how I've been able to keep up to date with a lot of the web stuff. And blogs too, I think, like, podcasts are great, and then blogs, as like a supplementary, or even just another form of the medium, uh, is where I do a lot of learning too.

**Martin Feld** 16:48

Ooh, now, I'm really, really intrigued by what you just said, right at the end there, when you said 'another form of the medium'. The way that you kind of put podcasts and blogs next to each other there—how do they interact or coexist for you?

**Lynn Fisher** 17:04

I think the way that those two things are published feel like they're two forms of the same thing to me, where, like a blog, I guess, maybe not in the realm of, like, a platform like Medium, if you think of, or like Substack, if you think of it like that, but in kind of the old days of blogs, where like, it's your blog, it's on your domain, feels like podcasts to me where you like, you publish it, and then you distribute it to the various places that people can consume it, right? Like with RSS feeds, and podcast apps and things like that, so those two, they feel at their heart the same to me, right, especially as, like, kind of forms of, like, personal sharing.

**Lynn Fisher** 17:45

And I think, you know, one is just having a conversation, audio-focused, and then one is written-word-focused. And, but both feel, especially in the dev world, where they feel really similar in their message, or like, what they're trying to accomplish, which is usually like, 'Hey, I, here's a thing I learned, here's how I did it', or like, 'Here's a new technology, and here's how you apply it', and, or, 'Here's my experience working at this particular company', or um, whatever, right? And it's, I think a lot of it is kind of that cool, like, sharing your experience, sharing your knowledge



and, you know, publishing for, I don't know... I think blogs are cool because of, like, ownership of your content, right? I think like that's the part that's cool, like, where a podcast, it's like, 'Oh, yeah, this is mine, this is coming from me', and a blog is really similar, as opposed to, like, other kind of publishing platforms that we've seen.

**Martin Feld** 18:36

Now, I do apologise if you can hear some really enthusiastic birds outside my study window. Um, that's one of the consequences of living in Australia and recording in the morning.

**Lynn Fisher** 18:44

Yeah, nice!

**Martin Feld** 18:45

It'll lend a different feel to this episode.

**Lynn Fisher** 18:47

Yeah!

**Martin Feld** 18:48

Now, I'm really interested in what you were talking about with fan work before, the way that you do it with your movie and TV interests, the fact that you've mentioned that you're a developer—or you follow dev-focused podcasts—you have that learning experience. When it comes to being a fan within that podcast realm—for example, I discovered you, I think, as a follower of or at least you'd interacted with shows like *The Talk Show with John Gruber*, or you were familiar with him as a blogger—so, what other kinds of show have you perhaps listened to in that community or interacted with? Is that something that's entered your realm?

**Lynn Fisher** 19:25

I think it's been really casual. Where I mean, yeah, so I know, I follow John Gruber for like *Daring Fireball*, like, blog stuff is where I know him from. And so like, crossing over medium, like, into podcasting. I haven't, I haven't listened to his podcast much, but I have... usually it's like, 'Hey, there's, this is a good episode, check this out'. I think one thing that's hard with fandom-type stuff when I think about it in that way, is that some podcasts, like, if you come really late into the podcast, like, it's been going on for years, sometimes it's harder to get into it, right? There's a lot of, it feels like there's a lot of history that exists already, where you're like, for me, I'm a little bit of a completionist. So I'm like, 'Oh, I got to start at the very beginning!' And then, you know, it's like years of podcasts that have existed.

**Lynn Fisher 20:12**

So I don't know that I've interacted a lot with other fandoms or with, you know, I think I'll like hop in and out. And usually, I think, like, recommend, like personal recommendations are where I kind of fall into that. Whereas someone will say, like, 'Hey, this episode, especially, is like up my alley', or like, has like, interesting points specifically about this thing, and then those are the ones I typically listen to. And sometimes there'll be a podcast, where I'll listen to one episode, and I'll be like, 'Oh, yeah, this is like, just for me', right? And then you kind of like, spend a couple of weeks just like catching up and listening to everything and that's pretty cool.

**Martin Feld 20:46**

'Completionist', you know, that shows some commitment. What shows are there that you've been a completionist with or gone back from the beginning and listened to the archive?

**Lynn Fisher 20:56**

Yeah, so a couple that I've been doing, is: *Maintenance Phase*, uh, which is a podcast about like, kind of the toxicity of the, like, health and wellness industry. And then, um, Michael Hobbes's other podcast, which is *If Books Could Kill*, which is kind of debunking airport books, is how they describe it, but like, you know, those popular, popsci kind of books that get really popular and sell millions of copies and kind of go into those. And one thing I've been doing now, I suppose, and that kind of started with these two is I was like, 'OK, I should start supporting the podcasts that I really like'. I've supported *The Weekly Planet* for a long time, and I'm like, 'Gosh, I should be, like, joining Patreons and stuff', so I started doing that this year. Um, and so I got some, like, bonus episodes, so I guess I am dipping my toe in a little bit more. I don't know that I'll be participating in, like, discussions and things like that, but I'm feeling excited to be like financially supporting more podcasts and that there's, like, a way to do that.

**Martin Feld 21:54**

That is another level of fan commitment or interaction. How does it feel once you've crossed that line (or that threshold) of financially supporting a podcast? Does it feel any different in your transition from being, I suppose, just a listener or following along to actually supporting them? How do you think about that?

**Lynn Fisher 22:12**

I mean, I think it feels good from, like, a personal level and also from, like, a, I don't know, not that I felt guilty, but more just like a, you know, wanting to support the creators that make things that you enjoy. Yeah, I think that with, like, conversations about Spotify, like not paying artists a lot and things like, I think it's hard to be able to, you know, enjoy things that are provided for free sometimes, right? And so, or not for free, but like for really low costs or whatever, and you want to be able to support the people that make what you like, so that they can continue to do that. So, I think from like a personal just like feeling good and supporting the work that I like, I think that

feels good. I don't know if it feels any different, like, as a fan, but I, again, I haven't really dived deep into like participating in community discussions or things like that. And I think maybe that would, like, shift maybe how I'm feeling.

**Martin Feld** 23:05

'Guilty' is a fascinating word that you've used there, and circling back to some of your very productive fan work, the projects that you mentioned, the things you do with your website and your blog, am I correct in saying that you do a lot of that without any remuneration or financial support?

**Lynn Fisher** 23:22

Uh, yeah, it's all... oh, yeah, I don't, I don't get paid for it. I have like a Buy Me a Coffee set up. And so I'll get like tips every once in a while someone really likes my site, but I've been trying not to do ads, or sponsorship or things like that, because kind of on the other side of it is sometimes I feel guilty when people are giving me money and I'm not producing, like, adequate pace, or like if, maybe I would feel like it would affect the work in some way. And it actually started, I have a site about airport codes, it like, explains the meaning of like three-letter airport codes. And that site, um, I feature a lot of photos on the site and they're all creative commons licensed photos. And so that one, like kind of out the gate was like, 'OK, we can't monetise this, because we're using people's work that are creative commons licence'. And so that, and I liked that actually, I was like, I'm creating this thing that to share with people and these, like generous photographers have, like, allowed me to use their work in my project.

**Lynn Fisher** 24:15

And so, that kind of like informed the way that I think about my projects, where I'm like, I kind of like that, it's just like a thing that I'm doing. I don't know, right?! It's just like, I wanted this thing to exist and so here it is. It's tough, because, like, it does cost me money to, like, host those and like, the domains like I love a good domain name. And so, there's, some of them are not cheap domains. But it's doable for me and I like it, and I don't know if I'll ever try to make that something that can support me, you know? I haven't really explored that, but for now, it's cool. It's just a side thing for me.

**Martin Feld** 24:51

No, I think that's fantastic. You're doing so much: you're listening to a lot of stuff; you're watching a lot of stuff; and you're doing meta commentary about all of those things. What are some things that you're maybe in the process of doing, or developing or that you're excited to do? You say you were always interested in learning more—what's left to do for you, maybe?

**Lynn Fisher 25:11**

I'm not sure right now. Like, right now I'm working on the next version of my portfolio, which I do every year, so that's exciting. I learn, I think with that I learn something new every year, just uh, I don't know, keep it, keep it fresh and try some new technologies that are coming out. I have a big backlog of just ideas for sites that I want to make or just like, pre-thoughts, right? Like, they're not quite fully formed...

**Lynn Fisher 25:34**

I actually had *Nestflix* in my backlog for a couple of years, where I was like, 'Is this an idea?' And I think it kind of, they kind of form over time, where it becomes more clear that something could be a project or not. So I have a few ideas kind of going... Um, I'd like to do, I think one thing I was thinking about is doing a site where I, like, can specifically teach something that I am good at, but in a way that is visual. And so, I don't know what that will be, but that's something that I'm exploring, I think that might be fun. I like using the Web in a creative way, specifically, like the Web as a medium, and so I've been thinking about, like, how can we use the Web to teach something that necessarily isn't web-related? Like you couldn't learn it this way in another medium... so like, not a YouTube video or not a instruction booklet or something like that, right? Like I think, I don't know...that's kind of what I've been thinking about.

**Martin Feld 26:27**

And you mentioned your portfolio there. And the fact that you've also got this, it's a huge task—at least it sounds like it to me—redoing your site or having this running archive. It's fascinating that you have visually displayed (from what I can see) each version of your website, how it looked in the past.

**Lynn Fisher 26:49**

Mm-hmmm?

**Martin Feld 26:49**

What do you think is the value in that? What enjoyment do you get out of having that visible archive where most people will probably just overwrite and move on?

**Lynn Fisher 26:58**

Yeah, I think that there's a few things. One, I think it's, it's valuable in showing—and this is more like, in hindsight—it shows folks who are learning, one, look how things evolve over time, right? Like, I think it's pretty clear how like, my skills have changed over time, and my creative expression has changed over time, which is kind of cool to see how a thing like a website, but also you can kind of, you know, infer how I've changed as the personal over time, right, as looking through it.

**Lynn Fisher** 27:25

So, there's that. I think, for me, personally, I like looking back, I think, artists, there's a lot of emphasis on like building your portfolio and, like, documenting your work. And so, I like looking back and seeing how I've changed, and also, it's cool, I look at stuff and I'm like, 'Wow, this was really neat!' Like, I think there's like, you know, I'm not embarrassed by my past work, 'cause, I think it's cool to see, like, how I've grown or where I was at at a certain point in time. And... I don't know, this is kind of a point of, I have mixed feelings about it. But I think like, the Web being ephemeral is, like, good and bad. And so, like, I embrace that with my site, where it's like, 'OK, this is just going to change every year', even if I like it, you know? Like, I think that there's like something cool about that.

**Lynn Fisher** 28:09

And that, I don't know, I like that things can just always be changing, but then I also like mourn the loss of, like, stuff that just disappears from the Web. And so, which is fine, I think if people want to remove things from the Web that they've created, that is totally fine and up to them. But I think that I would like... I just I like that it's available, it's still there. And so, someone was like, 'Oh, I saw a technique on Lynn's site from like, years ago, but gosh, I can't find it anymore'. But I like the idea that maybe you could go back and revisit each year, and maybe like, re-examine something that you remembered or just for folks that are learning now, there's a lot of like, kind of not, I mean, probably not work you would, probably not techniques you'd use in your production work, but at least, like, kind of some creative things that I'm doing, kind of pushing the Web as a medium. And so, I think it's cool that lots of teachers will say that they show their students these sites that they can, like, you know, see kind of these different techniques that I've been using over the years, so I think that's really cool, too.

**Martin Feld** 29:09

It strikes me that earlier in this conversation, we discussed that word, 'openness', in the context of technology and how people interact or share information, but it also sounds like you're embodying openness in terms of your process and transparency. Is that fair to say?

**Lynn Fisher** 29:27

Yeah, yeah, totally! I think I could, it's, in some ways, like, there are developers who will design their site, just like out in the open. So it's like, kind of perpetually in a state of like, in, 'under construction', right, which I think is like really cool! That's like, a little bit further than where I'm at, but yeah, I think I really want the work to be able to be examined, like, all my code is public on GitHub, too, so if developers want to go and like check out my site, and fork it and, like, try editing it and seeing how it works, like, I think that that is really important. And I like that they can do that, if that's something they wanted to do.

**Lynn Fisher 30:03**

I want to share all the things that I'm working on, but then also, I do a write-up too, every year of like, what I'm doing on the site, um, what techniques I'm trying and kind of my thought process and how I got there. I appreciate when other people do that, and so I'm trying to do that, too. I think some of the best blog posts are, 'Hey, I kind of like was thinking about this problem and here's how I solved it, or here's my approach', you know? And so I try to do that when I can.

**Martin Feld 30:31**

Now, a point that I don't want to lose—again, from earlier this conversation, I keep circling back. You mentioned that you went to art school. Was that right?

**Lynn Fisher 30:39**

Yes.

**Martin Feld 30:40**

Now, in the answer you just gave me there, you mentioned a very interesting word, which was 'technique'. 'Technique', really has that creative or artistic kind of definition or connotation to it. Would you mind telling me a little bit about your experience at art school or what you learnt through practicing art and maybe how that connects to your work, your fan work, your appreciation of different visual and audio media?

**Lynn Fisher 31:07**

Yeah, so I went to art school. My major was technically intermedia, which is pretty vague, right? But yeah...

**Martin Feld 31:15**

But it makes sense!

**Lynn Fisher 31:16**

Yeah, it does. And so it was, it was transformative for me for sure. I think there was a lot of things that affected the way that I think about the work now. So intermedia was a big part of it, where we really were thinking about medium as a constraint or as a liberator; I guess, some people might think of it that way, where the work is informed by the medium and when you change medium, it changes the work, right? And so I think that that is an interesting concept that we learned about and that I think about a lot, where, you know, I think about the Web, specifically: what can the Web do, that other medium, mediums can't do, right? (And vice versa) So that's a big thing that I think affected me.

**Lynn Fisher 32:01**

The other is, similarly, but constraints of the materials you're using. And so, I think a lot of what I learned was, 'OK, we're going to build something, and it's going to be only, you can only use sheet steel', or something, right? Like a sculpture kind of class and, or like a in a painting class, so you can only use the three primary colours, you can't use any black, you can't use any, um, other colours. And so, I think learning to use the, use your materials creatively, in ways that maybe you hadn't thought of before, or like outside of like the traditional use of those materials, and just showing that, like, the work is, like constraints can be powerful, right, but also that artists can create really beautiful work with not a lot, you know? And so I think, like, I do... one of my side projects is called *A Single Div*, and it's a CSS drawing project, where I use CSS to basically do illustrations, but with only one HTML element. And so, what that does, that is basically just an experiment in constraints. And so, I think that that's kind of a cool idea that I like exploring, that I think derived directly from what I learned in school.

**Martin Feld 33:13**

Wow... basically, what I've got from you here is that you play so many different roles, or practise so many different artistic and technical things, there are lots of aspects to your identity, I suppose personally and on the Web. How do you think about who you are or what your identity is, whether it's art, development? How would you characterise yourself?

**Lynn Fisher 33:39**

Uh, yeah, that's hard! I think... I don't know. I think, uh... that's tough. I've always kind of described myself as making weird projects, like the weird, just being the thing you're, like, most excited about... uh, like an enthusiast, maybe is the way to think about it, right? Like, here's the thing that I'm excited about and so that's the thing that I'm focused on now. Some people would say like, 'I'm a generalist', or I still describe myself just as a web designer, because I think of myself, I think the web part is the most important part too, where like, I think we got away as an industry from describing people as web designers. It became like UX, or UI or product, right? But I think of myself definitely, as a web designer, as a creative... I don't know, a creative building person building things for the Web. But yeah, I don't know.

**Lynn Fisher 34:31**

I think that's always been a struggle for me. And I mean, but not a struggle in that like, I'm OK with it, right?! Like I think, it's always been... uh, that's... the place where it shows up where it's hard, I think is like if I ever had to, like write a résumé, like, that would be hard to like, create, like a focused, like, kind of story. Luckily, I've been able to find jobs where the team was, like, appreciative of the fact that I was kind of all over the place and focused on lots of different things and had lots of interests. But yeah, just maybe, like, I don't know! An eclectic weirdo making things for the Web!

**Martin Feld** 35:04

Eclectic weirdo... if I gave episode titles that weren't just people's names, that would probably be a great title for this episode.

**Lynn Fisher** 35:10

Yeah!

**Martin Feld** 35:11

And another word I want to pick on... you said 'generalist' there. 'Generalist' is very interesting and it's an antonym of 'specific', which is in the name of this show. What value do you derive perhaps from being a generalist, or what do you think is important or beneficial about being a generalist?

**Lynn Fisher** 35:32

As it relates to work, I think where I found a lot of value is being able to speak towards lots of different things and be able to collaborate with lots of different people within a team. And so, I'm able to jump. I like working on a variety of things, as, maybe is obvious! And so, I like that I can kind of work on different parts of things, like, I can do a little bit of content, I can do a little bit of development, a little bit of design. And I think, that that has been valuable for me and, like, fulfilling for me, but I think it's also valuable for teams where there are folks that can like bridge gaps, you know? Like, I think the, 'How do designers and developers work better together?' is like, the kind of just perpetual question always, like, maybe we'll get there. But I think that I fill that role nicely of being able to communicate between two different kind of areas of specialty, different priorities that people see.

**Lynn Fisher** 36:24

And then yeah, I think what's cool about being a generalist, I think, is that every kind of different thing that you learn informs the way that you think about all the other things that you know. I think, like, you create kind of this web of just like stuff, that's all kind of interconnected. And so, like, you learn one thing, and it maybe it doesn't feel like it is meaningful to the, anything you're working on, but like years later, it's like, 'Ohhh...!', like this feel, you know, like, you make a connection and it like makes your work different. Usually, I think it makes it better, but not always, right? I think, but it does, it changes you; everything you learned changes you in a way. And I like that, I like that... I don't know, I think that there's just like the concept of intermedia, right, which is that all these things are just kind of talking to each other and changing the way that the work gets done, or the work, how the work is interpreted. And I just really like that.

**Martin Feld** 37:19

From there, I asked you earlier if you had things left to do, but just inspired by that last response, perhaps more specifically, are there things that you would like to learn or become an expert in, contrary to that generalist identity that you have?



**Lynn Fisher** 37:19

I do think sometimes I'm like, 'Ah, it'd be nice to be, like, an expert in something'. I see people that have really deep expertise on a topic, and I'm like, 'Wow, that's so cool!' Like, I appreciate that so much and I am just in awe of it. But then also, I think pairing up a specialist like that with someone like me is, like, a great team-up too and so I like that, I like working with folks like that, where, um, I can, we can do kind of quick handoffs and um, help each other where each of us maybe doesn't have the right knowledge, so yeah.

**Lynn Fisher** 38:06

Um, I mean, there are lots of things I want to learn. I don't know that I would ever go so far as becoming, wanting to become an expert in anything. That doesn't feel reachable for me, just knowing myself and knowing how I function. So, one thing that I'll do is: I'll just pick a thing I want to learn and just kind of dive into it for... like a year. And then, maybe I'll kind of pick up and move on to the next thing. And so, I don't know what, what's next. I think from like a, just a purely hobby standpoint, I really want to learn how to bind books. That's one thing I've been researching, which is kind of cool. I think that that would be fun to learn how to do.

**Lynn Fisher** 38:48

Although I've also been like, 'I need to pick some hobbies that are cheaper'. Just like, all these hobbies I pick up I have to like buy all this equipment for it. But yeah, I think there's a lot of cool web stuff coming out. I think I'm always perpetually learning JavaScript. And so, there's just a lot of cool ways that I would like to use JavaScript to make art on the Web. And so, that's something that I've been like wanting to dive into. But yeah, those are the kind of things top of mind, but I'm always open to just kind of jumping into something new. I think I have a little bit of like, 'How hard can it be?!' kind of, brain, you know?! But I do, I do kind of jump from thing to thing, which is fun.

**Martin Feld** 39:29

You've covered a lot in this conversation, and I'm very grateful for that. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to mention?

**Lynn Fisher** 39:38

Uh, I don't think so!

**Martin Feld** 39:40

No worries, that's cool! Look, Lynn, I'm very grateful for the time that you've spent on this podcast. Thanks for sharing your view on intermedia, podcasts, your creative experience—it's been great to have you on *Really Specific Stories*.

**Lynn Fisher** 39:55

Yeah, thank you so much!