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# BEHIND THE SCREEN

## MY CONVERSATION WITH THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE DIGITAL COMMONS AT KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

BY MISTY LANTRIP



The Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University

Knowledge is power. Access to knowledge, empowering. On the second floor of the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University, Aajay Murphy works to disseminate knowledge to those here at the university and beyond. The Digital Commons at Kennesaw State holds a wealth of research sourced from graduate students, faculty, staff, and other select journals. Housing this open-access repository is invaluable to the Kennesaw State community, but most people don't even know it exists.

### THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

Aajay Murphy earned his Bachelor of Science in Sociology, Master of Arts in American Studies, and a Graduate Certificate in Digital and Social Media at Kennesaw State University. Kennesaw State is the third-largest university in the state of Georgia. It consists of thirteen different colleges

across two campuses and offers over 150 different degrees. The university prides itself on diversity and has been awarded an R2 classification by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning. This means Kennesaw State is a doctoral institution with a high level of engagement in research activity. Only six percent of colleges and universities in the nation fall into this category or above, making it a pretty prestigious award. Having a digital repository that can house the thesis papers, dissertations, and other academic works composed by the faculty, staff, and students is vital in maintaining and promoting further research.

Mr. Murphy has a love for coffee and the culture surrounding it. He has been a coffee roaster, barista, and competition judge. He was able to combine this enthusiasm with his academic life by writing his master's thesis on coffee culture in El Salvador. During his time as a graduate student, Mr. Murphy worked as a Graduate Research Assistant in the library. It was there, nearly six years ago, that he took the opportunity to apply for his current position, Managing Editor of the Digital Commons.



Aajay Murphy; Managing Editor and coffee enthusiast

As I near graduation, I begin to seriously consider the direction I would like to take towards a future career. I'm not sure I'm ready to leave academia yet, so learning about a job like Mr. Murphy's piqued my interest. I requested a meeting with him to learn more. He kindly accepted, and we met on a quiet Wednesday morning at his office inside the Sturgis Library.

## MORE THAN JUST A JOB

Aajay Murphy's job has many different facets, some that I did not expect. I have done a lot of writing myself, but I have limited experience with editing outside of what is necessary for my courses and personal writing. Somewhere along the way, I developed this false notion that editing would be a dull and repetitious job. But I learned that it isn't just about reading someone else's work to find room for improvement. Mr. Murphy deals with content, layout, graphic design, and offers support to other editors. Outside of his work at the university, he serves on the editorial board for the *Journal of New Librarianship*. I was excited by the idea of engaging in different types of tasks so that work would not feel too monotonous.

In addition to work from members of the university, Kennesaw State houses twenty-five different journals in the Digital Commons. Mr. Murphy provides support for these journals, and the level of involvement varies from journal to journal. One example is the *Oglethorpe Journal of Undergraduate Research* which Kennesaw State

helps publish. By doing so, it makes the work of those students available to people who would not otherwise have access to it. Another example is the *Young African Leaders Journal of Development* that now benefits from a more global audience by being a part of the Digital Commons. Mr. Murphy told me that "We should be expanding and giving the platform to those who don't have access to it." I could feel his dedication to fostering more research and helping others increase readership. It is important to do work that can help or serve others in a positive way, so hearing about his ability to reach out and allow others the opportunity to share their work was inspiring.

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## LOOKING FORWARD

Our conversation proved to be insightful on many levels. Not only did I learn there is more to editing than I originally thought, but also that it is possible to use those skills to help others in ways that serve us all. Mr. Murphy said it best when he simply stated that "Everyone on campus can benefit from using the Digital Commons." He would love to see more students and faculty contributing, but the repository does not currently get the attention it needs. There are still many who are unaware of its existence. Making the Digital Commons more known to people at the university would greatly benefit Kennesaw State and its research efforts. It could also inspire other institutions to get involved or create repositories of their own. ♦