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# Discard Studies

## Wasting, Systems, and Power

By: Max Liboiron, Josh Lepawsky

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# Acknowledgments

Once upon a time in New York City, Dr. Robin Nagle had a doctoral student named Max Liboiron who was just starting a dissertation and another doctoral student named Samantha MacBride who was just finishing. Each of the three had different approaches to studying systems of waste and waste management, but all were united in a dogged commitment to ethics, accountability, and the implications of their work for those outside of the academy. Indeed, as an anthropologist-in-residence and former sanitation worker (Nagle), the deputy director for recycling in the New York City Department of Sanitation (now director of research and operations at the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability; MacBride), and an activist (Liboiron), each showed the others the nuances of community accountability in research on waste. Thank you, Robin and Samantha, for those invaluable early lessons as well as your trust and unwavering support of my (Max's) work. You both set my path on discard studies in the best way possible.

It's not often that listening to an academic talk makes you actually sit up, riveted by what you're hearing, but

that's exactly what happened when I (Josh) first learned about Max's work on ocean plastics. Hearing Max speak in New York City in 2012, I knew that it was *essential* for me to follow their work from that point on. I would have been reading, learning from, and citing Max's work no matter where they ended up. What I didn't know—nor could have known at the time—was that I would be so lucky as to later be working *with* Max in the same department and on shared projects such as this book.

This book is based on many years of editing, reading, and writing for the *Discard Studies* blog. Many of the blog posts authored by us (Max and Josh) are rewritten or referenced in this book. It has been a pleasure to show what happens when you sustain a regular conversation for nearly a decade and can weave those choppy but consistent lessons into a logical, longform text like the one you're holding.

The *Discard Studies* blog was founded by Robin Nagle, and I (Max) started blogging for the platform as her graduate student, eventually taking over its maintenance and governance. At the time of this writing, I've produced over 450 posts for the *Discard Studies* blog and edited and managed countless more. As I became a busier and busier professor at Memorial University, I needed help maintaining this labor of love. I had only to look down the hall for first Josh Lepawsky and then Alex Zahara, both colleagues in the Department of Geography at Memorial, who are now coeditors of the blog. We had also been part of the short-lived but intensely

chatty, brainy, and lovely Waste and Science, Technology and Environment (WaSTE) group at the university, along with Arn Keeling, Charles Mather, Dean Bavington, Anne Dance, and Grace Akese. This work at Memorial has been supported by Pam Murphy, Norm Catto, Valarie James, Dominique Lavers, and (as chair) Arn Keeling. Conversations with guest authors, editors, and readers of *Discard Studies* have also been paramount in developing our thinking. Thank you to the hundreds of authors, guest editors, and subscribers that make *Discard Studies* what it is.

We also want to thank each other, odd as that might be in this format. While there might be parts of this book that are “so Josh” and “totally Max,” the ideas and writing have been unified and developed through our overlapping shared labor and commitment to one another as coauthors. It is exciting, even electrifying at times, to think together on a topic each of us has been considering for over a decade. The nuance, the subtlety, and the joy of thinking closely together has been enlivening. At the same time, working *together* has meant that when one of us is teaching overload and doing full time childcare, or when we suddenly become an executive administrator for the entire university for two years, the other can take over. We are confident that the other has our back, has our best interest in mind, will be brilliant without us, and will always check in. Writing together has been a joy.



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