2012 was declared to be “the year of the MOOC” by no less than the New York Times, but stories of failure abounded in 2013 about Massive Open Online Courses. The public read tales of defections, meltdowns, protests, and palace coups by faculty and scandals involving vandalism and cheating by students. With retention rates hovering at 5%, few universities are greeting 2014 with the same revolutionary fervor that characterized the optimistic press releases and photo ops of the previous year. Even MOOC guru Sebastian Thrun has taken off his rose-colored Google glasses and admitted that his company, Udacity, was guilty of churning out a “lousy product” that didn’t merit its exalted spot on the “front pages of newspapers and magazines.”

Fortunately, 2013 was a great year for dozens of faculty members piloting their own large-scale experiment in networked learning, Dialogues on Feminism and Technology, which took the form of a DOCC or Distributed Open Collaborative Course. Their collective efforts produced a series of video dialogues, which is currently available at femtechnet.newschool.edu, featuring the work of innovative feminists, such as Anne Balsamo, Shu Lea Cheang, Wendy Chun, Maria Fernandez, Donna Haraway, Lynn Hershman, Alexandra Juhasz, Lisa Nakamura, Dorothy Roberts, Lucy Suchman, Judy Wajcman, and Faith Wilding. There were other deliverables provided to the 15 institutions that hosted 18 nodal courses taught by 25 faculty. Provocative experiments with using social media tools in hybrid instruction were
encouraged by the FemTechNet community. Students edited Wikipedia, wrote blog entries, generated maps and visualizations, and exchanged personal DIY creations. New pedagogical exercises emerged out of a process of classroom trial-and-error, back and forth conversation on listservs, and regular faculty meetings on Google Hangouts that recognized the importance of infrastructure, labor, and generosity in systems of credit.