

**Expanding Literate Landscapes: Persons, Practices, and Sociohistoric Perspectives of Disciplinarity Development**, by Kevin Roozen and Joe Erickson. Computers and Composition Digital P/Utah State UP, 2017. <http://ccdigitalpress.org/expanding/index.html>.

*Reviewed by Leslie Taylor, Georgia State University and Dalton State College*

Though a composition classroom may not always afford opportunities for in-depth literacy reflection, *Expanding Literate Landscapes: Persons, Practices, and Sociohistoric Perspectives of Disciplinarity Development*, by Kevin Roozen and Joe Erickson, does. This book provides readers with the opportunity to consider literacy broadly and specifically by presenting five detailed case studies that consider both the vernacular literacies and academic literacies of five people in various stages of life. The authors present these case studies in response to what Anne Beaufort describes as the “dominant metaphor of writing development,” a metaphor that is “one of seeing writers moving from outsider to insider status in particular discourse communities or activity systems” (1.02). Roozen and Erickson acknowledge that this metaphor, developed over the last thirty years, has sought to explain how writers develop within disciplines. They draw on the work of Charles Bazerman, Anne Beaufort, David Bartholomae, and many others to explain that “the dominant stories about disciplinary development” tend to “depict newcomers entering an unfamiliar disciplinary territory and moving from the periphery toward some more central location. At the center are the core discourse, practices, knowledge, and values shared by all members of the community” (1.02). According to the insider-outsider metaphor, becoming literate in a discipline is “a fairly straightforward process” (1.02) wherein a writer learns the conventions of the discipline.

While the dominant insider-outsider metaphor may reveal much about disciplinary writing, Roozen and Erickson aim to move conversations about disciplinary development away from the dominant metaphor. They draw from scholarship such as Paul Prior’s and Prior and Jody Shipka’s that “point to the situated and dispersed nature of disciplinary writing, learning, and socialization” as a means for challenging the dominant metaphor (1.04). Roozen and Erickson claim that what happens outside of the discipline is crucial: “Those histories outside the supposed borders, the paths people trace across lifeworlds, and that flow into and emanate from disciplinary sites, are vitally important,” and they examine those histories as a means of enriching our understanding of literacy and improving the way we teach composition (1.02). Most importantly, Roozen and Erickson successfully use their case studies to argue and demonstrate that “the development of disciplinary ways of being needs to be

understood in relation to, rather than apart from, learner's broader literate lives" (Home). Each of their case studies skillfully illustrate this argument.

This innovative book is an open access multimodal text published by Computers and Composition Digital Press. *Expanding Literate Landscapes* includes a traditional academic text enriched with audio and video clips, drawings, and writing samples that illustrate various components of each case study. Student experiences and processes are sometimes presented to readers through videos so that readers can hear directly from the subject, unmediated by the authors. Readers are also given artifacts such as drawings or notes from students that exemplify their processes and products and help make concrete the concepts being discussed. Though the text is meant to be experienced in multiple modes, each recording helpfully includes a transcript. The approach and included artifacts make the text and its ideas widely accessible. The authors acknowledge that the text's innovative format was inspired by Patrick Berry, Cynthia Selfe, and Gail Hawisher's *Transnational Literate Lives*, a book-length multimodal project.

*Expanding Literate Landscapes* opens with two video clips that show two people engaging in literate activities, an entry point for connecting and understanding the relationship between vernacular literacy practices and disciplinary literacy practices. It is here that Roozen and Erickson carefully identify the central assumptions guiding their study: "Disciplinary development is not homogeneous and linear, but is heterogeneously situated among varied historical trajectories that reach across the expansive literate landscapes a person inhabits" (1.01). Equally important, they write, "Disciplinary writing, learning, and socialization are mediated by the many discourses, practices, artifacts, and identities of a person's life" (1.01). They set out to illustrate and prove these ideas by examining the results of their ethnographic study of five people of different ages and with different backgrounds, careers, and educational goals. Before moving into those ethnographies, however, the writers begin by situating their research in the context of other conversations about how people become literate in a discipline. As Roozen and Erickson's research shows, people bring their everyday literacies into their disciplines, and seeing those connections offers additional insight into how disciplinary literacy develops: inside *and* outside of a discipline.

Chapter two identifies the theories and methods used in the ethnography. Drawing heavily on mediated discourse theory and the scholarship of Prior, the authors create case studies that examine how literate practices created and enacted outside of disciplinary settings influence, conflict, and entangle each other. The case studies consider literate activity, literacy histories, focused interviews, sample texts, and activities and practices. This variety of narratives comes from a range of media and times of the participants'—or "co-researchers,"

as Roozen and Erickson describe them—lives as a means of demonstrating the complexity and variation of literacy development. Chapter three follows Charles, a student placed in basic writing who also has a history of award-winning writing for newspapers. Chapter four focuses on Kate, an English studies student and writer of fan-fiction who went on to earn an MA and PhD in rhetoric and composition. Chapter five considers Lindsey, a graphic design student turned language arts teacher. Chapter six studies Terri, a nurse who is also a prolific writer of poetry and religious devotionals. Chapter seven looks at Alexandra, an engineering student, puzzle-solver, and fan-fiction writer.

All of these chapters lead to the conclusions and implications presented in the final chapter. The authors conclude that “disciplinary development is a product of people’s acting with a dynamic and heterogeneous nexus of practice assembled from a lifetime of literate engagements” (8.01). Understanding this has broad implications for both teaching and researching in the field. Perhaps most useful from a pedagogical standpoint is the way Roozen and Erickson use case studies to show how literate activities outside the classroom can enrich disciplinary literacy. Such is the case with Alexandra, the engineering student who quickly becomes adept with Excel because of her experience with the game *Minecraft*. The tables in *Minecraft* work much like those in Excel, helping Alexandra to transfer her game playing skills to using Excel, an essential program in her discipline. In contrast, literate activities outside the classroom can block students from adopting new practices that can help them. For example, Charles, the newspaper writer whose reporting relied heavily on surveys he conducted, may have relied so heavily on statistics that it “perhaps kept him from exploring other means of developing and supporting his arguments” (8.02.02). The case studies raise important questions for those of us who teach composition. More specifically, how can we identify and encourage non-disciplinary habits that might benefit students if they can adapt and transfer them? At the same time, how can we encourage students to attempt and adopt new practices for new tasks?

Roozen and Erickson also conclude that “although disciplinary and everyday activities may appear worlds apart, in reality they are always woven together” (8.02.05). Since many who teach writing ask students to write literacy narratives, perhaps that is one way to highlight how students’ disciplinary and everyday activities are “woven together.” Though one assignment is unlikely to provide the kind of insight Roozen and Erickson’s in-depth case studies provide, it is a good pedagogical tool for connecting students’ various literacies. Not realizing the ways these literacies are woven together makes it easy to misunderstand the way disciplinary literacies develop; for example, without tracing Charles’s literate activities—both in and out of the classroom—the authors might have left their study not understanding how Charles’s disciplinary

development was so heavily influenced by his newspaper writing. Such a dual focus is a step towards “generating [the] richer, fuller accounts of disciplinary writing, learning, and enculturation” (8.03) that Roozen and Erickson set out to illuminate. They also see this approach as taking us beyond the idea that people merely participate in a variety of literate activities; their work helps us see that the boundaries we imagine between disciplinary and non-disciplinary writing do not exist. Literacy develops on a continuum, or a literate landscape, and knowing this helps us better understand how disciplinary literacy truly develops and exists alongside vernacular literacy.

Dalton, GA

### Works Cited

- Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” *When a Writer Can’t Write: Studies in Writer’s Block and Other Composing-Process Problems*, edited by Mike Rose, Guilford Press, 1985, pp. 134-65.
- Bazerman, Charles. “What Written Knowledge Does: Three Examples of Academic Discourse.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1981, pp. 361-87.
- Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond*. Utah State UP, 2007.
- . “Developmental Gains of a History Major: A Case for Building a Theory of Disciplinary Writing Expertise.” *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 136-85.
- Berry, Patrick W., Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe. *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times*. Computers and Composition Digital P/Utah State UP, 2012.
- Prior, Paul. *Writing/Disciplinarity: A Sociohistoric Account of Literate Activity in the Academy*. Erlbaum, 1998.
- Prior, Paul, and Jody Shipka. “Chronotopic Lamination: Tracing the Contours of Literate Activity.” *Writing Selves, Writing Societies: Research from Activity Perspectives*, edited by Charles Bazerman and David R. Russell. The WAC Clearinghouse and Mind, Culture, and Activity, 2003, pp. 180-238.