

From the Editorial Assistants: An Interview with Laura R. Micciche

As editorial assistants, we invited outgoing *Composition Studies* editor Laura R. Micciche to participate in an interview about her time with the journal. Micciche became editor of *Composition Studies* in 2013, bringing it to the University of Cincinnati. She is currently working with incoming editors Matt Davis (University of Massachusetts Boston) and Kara Taczak (University of Denver) on the journal's transition. As Micciche was wrapping up the spring 2019 issue, we asked her about working on the final issue, hiring graduate students, and developing inclusive editorial practices. Call this an exit interview, but we're calling it a celebration of her achievements.

So, it's your last issue. How are you feeling?

Proud of the work accomplished by the whole editorial team, David Blakesley at Parlor Press, the authors, reviewers, and review board. Definitely takes a village to do this work. I'm also feeling hopeful about the future of the journal because incoming editors Matt Davis and Kara Taczak bring a lot of experience from their time working as editorial assistants for *CCC* and a good dose of enthusiasm too. I'll definitely miss working with authors so closely, as that has been one of the great joys of this position, but I'm still in the editing game. With Chris Carter, I'm co-editing the WPA book series for Parlor Press.

You became *Composition Studies* editor in 2013. What do you remember about that first year and the work involved?

I remember thinking that I wasn't ready for the job. An independent journal like *CS* has no host organization to streamline the transition process. There's no training manual, only what the previous editor relays and recommends. Jennifer Clary-Lemon, who was editor before me, created an excellent guide for me that helped orient me to the many tasks involved with small-scale academic journal publishing. I had never before thought about how the work I read in JSTOR or ProQuest got there. Now I know that, for an independent journal, the editorial team sends the issue via email to a contact at one of these subscription companies. I also had to learn how to navigate our submission manager, Open Journal Systems (OJS), a platform that makes the editorial process streamlined, for sure, but isn't what I'd call transparent for a new user. Speaking of that, I had to figure out who at my university could help me figure out how to host OJS on a local server.

Another first thing I remember about becoming editor is reading through the many files that Clary-Lemon shared with me via Dropbox. I looked at

everything from decades-old correspondence between editors and authors to feedback on manuscripts from editorial team members. And then I read the first five or so years of the journal, beginning with the first pamphlet in 1972 when the journal was called *Freshman English News*. Interesting how much of the content from those early issues returns in different forms—in the first issue, for instance, Thomas W. Wilcox wrote about “The Trend Towards Freshman Seminars,” and several contributions argued over what “freshman composition” should teach, a topic that re-emerges in early issues addressing teaching “minority” students and teaching with multimedia. You can see historical grooves when you look back at publishing in the pre-professional age of composition studies. Gave me a more expansive understanding of how we got to the present moment.

During your editorship, what experiences stand out?

Working with advanced graduate students and junior scholars on their first publication. Affirming that an author’s work is important and needs to be shared. Meeting authors and talking with prospective authors at CCCC about their work. Getting into the weeds while copyediting and, along the way, figuring out something new about a piece. Worrying about the sustainability of print journals and the fiscal health of CS—not wanting to be the person who drove it into the red. Collaborating on the production process with you two and other editorial assistants over the years: Kelly Blewett, Christiane Boehr, Christina LaVecchia, and Janine Morris. Impossible without a team!

How has your research or writing been changed by your time as editor?

I’ve learned so much about the field, the kinds of questions people are asking, methods they are using, pressing issues for contemporary readers and scholars. Yes, I’ve been changed. One definite takeaway is that I’ve expanded the methods I use to do research. For a long time, I relied on textual analysis, which probably reflects my training in an English department during the height of poststructuralism. The more I learned from authors about methodological diversity, the more I felt a shortcoming in my own work. During my editorship, I attended the Dartmouth Summer Seminar on Research where I got a very challenging and exciting crash course in qualitative and quantitative research methods. Soon after, I conducted qualitative research for *Acknowledging Writing Partners* (WAC and University of Colorado Press 2017). During the same period, I integrated more qualitative research in the courses I teach, aiming to prepare students to be versatile researchers with a repertoire of methods to suit the questions they want to study.

Under your direction, *Composition Studies* was the winner of the 2017 Outstanding Composition and Rhetoric Journal Award in Recognition of Inclusive Editorial Practices. Congrats again! What are some inclusive editorial practices that you value?

This gets more attention by Kelly Blewett, Christina LaVecchia, Janine Morris, and me in the March 2019 special issue of *College English* devoted to editing, so I'll keep this brief. Some of what we've tried: attending presentations by recipients of Scholars for the Dream awards and inviting panelists to submit their work to *CS*, doing the same at special interest group sessions, recruiting for diverse representation on the editorial board and within the reviewer pool, developing sections of the journal that allow for submissions other than long-form articles, welcoming plural methodologies, and intervening at the level of citation when an argument requires engagement with more robust source material. There's a lot more to do, but this is some of what we've been working on over the past six years.

Tell us about your next editorial or research project. Or both!

As I mentioned, I'm co-editing a WPA book series and look forward to working with authors in that capacity (people of writing studies, send your work: <https://www.parlorpress.com/wpa.html>). Aside from that, I'm at the beginning stages of a project that studies "the mundane" stuff of faculty life in writing studies. My idea is that by tracking writing faculty's everyday experiences within academic institutions, I will be able to show how small actions, behaviors, feelings, and experiences accumulate and form larger systemic patterns. I hope the data I ultimately collect will form a varied portrait of rituals and routines, institutional social orders, place-based practices, and taken-for-granted realities in workplaces differentiated by location, status, resource availability, student and faculty populations, and intersectional identities. I'm thinking this will be a longitudinal cross-institutional research study, which I've never done before. Perfect time to do something new since 2019 marks my 20th year of faculty life!

You've hired graduate students to assist with copyediting, proofreading and archiving. What advice would you give graduate students who are interested in editorial work?

Approach editors—especially editors of independent journals—to ask if they could use some help. You might be surprised by their answers! When you go to conferences or other professional gatherings, talk to editors. Ask them how they found their way to this work and what pathways they might recommend

to you. When your writing is edited for publication, pay attention to editor marks and comments so that you can understand what decisions the editor is making. And, if you like resource guides, pick up *The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications*, 3rd edition, by Amy Einsohn. It's surprisingly readable and packed with useful information.

What can we look forward to in the spring 2019 issue?

This issue is a blockbuster. We've got a Composing With by Alexandra Hidalgo about composing independent documentary films. Next, we feature eight articles focused on an impressive range of topics: designing a writing major, encouraging linguistically diverse student writers in fyw, understanding influences on L2 writing instructors' pedagogical decision-making, teaching fyc with a Spanish-English approach, tracking constructions of reading and readers in writing textbooks, writing in military contexts, reimagining dissertation committees, and reflecting on literate dwellings. The Where We Are section consists of 116 six-word sentences on the topic of "My Mundane Professional Life." The unattributed entries are compiled in poetic form, generating a collective portrait of what writing faculty encounter, do, and feel on a daily basis. Funny, touching, maddening—this piece has a little bit of everything. Finally, we round out this issue with seven book reviews and one review essay. If you're like me and can't keep up with scholarship in writing studies, start here! And thanks for reading, sharing, and submitting your work (yes, that means YOU, dear reader).

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