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Cross-Border Networks in Writing Studies examines writing studies scholars as networked and cross-border, meaning that Canadian and American writing studies scholars are connected through different yet overlapping contexts, histories, and methods. These connections allow scholars to blend a network of methods that can help to understand how disciplines, ideas, and networks have formed across the Canada/US border. The collection encourages researchers to reflect upon disciplinary developments and to see how networks have developed over a half century. By studying these networks, Mueller, Williams, Wetherbee Phelps, and Clary-Lemon argue that the fields of writing studies in Canada and in the United States are more intertwined than previous histories have acknowledged. Their interconnection derives from relationships formed in local contexts that have become larger national and international networks, translating what is localized into wider macro-level conversations that influence the field of writing studies in the United States, Canada, and further abroad. Taken together, these networks help scholars understand disciplinary, conceptual, methodological, and epistemological developments and how they impact writing studies.

The collection’s strength is how it balances broad, quantifiable trends in writing studies with focused, qualitative reports on programmatic and personal developments within writing studies communities. The collection is bookended by Mueller (chapter two) and Clary-Lemon (chapter five) who examine broader national/international and programmatic networks. The middle chapters by Williams (chapter three) and Wetherbee Phelps (chapter four) zoom in to examine individual scholars and the various networks they have formed and participated in during their careers. This structure allows the authors to display the multiplicity of networks that have formed and highlight the numerous layers derived from these networks.

By highlighting these complexities, the authors make visible various nodes that have formed within Canadian writing studies and offer new understandings—both micro and macro—that can contribute to an emerging field. Canadian writing studies has struggled to connect research networks across provinces and across the border into the United States, which has hindered writing studies from establishing disciplinary space in Canada (see Clary-Lemon; Paré; Wetherbee Phelps). Understanding how these nodes connect in
Canada and in the United States can bring these networks together for future research collaboration.

Readers may also see these connections and understand how programs on either side of the border are more interconnected than previous histories have acknowledged. Mueller’s chapter two highlights border crossings and how scholars form connections between countries. His mapping traces how scholars move between localities and how these moves expand networks over time, whether that is through supervisor-supervisee relationships, institutional affiliations, or shared publication avenues. The maps provide an excellent visual of the fluidity of these networks and how they have expanded over time. The maps are available online, which makes up for the printed screenshots’ lack of the color and space necessary to trace the networks thoroughly. The online maps allow readers to go deeper in their exploration and gain a better understanding of the circles in which they float, either consciously or unconsciously. These maps show us that, no matter how disparate and sometimes disconnected writing scholars may seem because of geography and a lack of disciplinary cohesion, few degrees separate us; we could, hypothetically, open networks and connections that were heretofore closed.

This broad view of cross-border networks synthesizes the movement of many individual scholars, each of whom has their own story of how their networks formed. Williams’s chapter three delves into these stories to understand how individual scholars saw their intellectual and disciplinary development. The intricacy of these stories, the way that they overlap and complicate each other, creates a tableau of the rich diversity of experiences that shape writing studies. For example, many participants considered the CCCC an integral space for Canadian scholars to develop communities. This was true for scholars like Doug Brent and Anthony Paré in the 1980s, and Daniel Richards had a similar experience twenty-five years later. While their overlapping experiences show how essential CCCC is for forming communities, their stories also identify an ongoing struggle for writing studies communities to form. These stories demonstrate the necessity for cross-border networks to form so that scholars may continue to find innovative ways to connect through research despite having little disciplinary home.

The work of individual scholars and their networked identities is continued in chapter four by Wetherbee Phelps. What stands out the most is how this chapter complicates the relationship between scholars in the United States and Canada. The four scholars that Wetherbee Phelps examines complicate the notion of a “Canadian scholar” because these identities are always shifting. This is evident in the Canadian scholars’ desire to have their own publication rather than only meeting at CCCC. Their initiative produced *Inkshed*, a newsletter where Canadian scholars could discuss language acquisition, reading, theory,
writing, rhetoric, and discourse analysis. Wetherbee Phelps also highlights the fluidity of writing scholar identities through Catherine Schryer’s multidisciplinary collaboration examining communication across professional boundaries, including healthcare and forensics. The chapter highlights the creative paths that scholars take to work across disciplinary borders and to combine expertise. Collaboration allows research and methodological networks to expand and offers writing studies the potential to develop new ways of understanding the work that we do.

Departing from the focus on individual networked identities in chapters three and four, Clary-Lemon’s case study on the University of Winnipeg’s Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication (chapter five) pushes readers to consider the wider implications of networked identities. By tracing the Department’s challenges and accomplishments over time and its recent curriculum consultation and design process, Clary-Lemon demonstrates how networks may draw upon each other to refine programmatic, methodological, pedagogical, and research practice. Seeing this on a programmatic level is insightful because it takes these vast networks and shows how they translate to individual institutions. The way that the department drew upon the CWPA outcomes statement and adapted the University of Rhode Island’s (URI) process for forming a writing major made this more than just a Canadian case study. They understood that the contexts differed but that the URI outcomes could help them to refine their degree program outcomes. Rather, Clary-Lemon situates the case study as a complex interrelation of networks formed between the United States and Canada that inform and translate to other geographical locations to suit emerging/evolving programmatic needs. Outcomes from more established American contexts, such as URI and CWPA, can be useful in emergent Canadian contexts where scholars are establishing the foundation for their programming.

Broadly speaking, this collection can prompt writing scholars—whether they are Canadian or American—to go broader and deeper in the quest to define and articulate what we do and how it impacts our institutions. In the short and medium term, it would be useful to extend the questions that they pose to consider the networks that emerging scholars are forming. Chapters two (Mueller), three (Williams), and four (Wetherbee Phelps) highlight how individual scholars became networked through interconnections with each other, through supervisor-supervisee relationships, through conferences, and through research collaborations. A next step for writing scholars could be to trace emerging trends in various writing studies networks to anticipate where the field is going, how these networks may be supported, and where they can be better developed. Examining new scholars’ participation in conferences and major publications, new institutional hires, or developing writing stud-
ies programs could all provide valuable insight about the field. Granted, this work would be complicated given that it is easier to examine a network that is already formed rather than being formed, but it could be rewarding for disciplinary purposes.

Andrea Lunsford’s afterword comments that these essays “will surely inspire other collaborative cross-border efforts to map, explore, and chart out field of study” (181), suggesting that Cross-Border Networks in Writing Studies is a collection to which we may return as a benchmark to help define and redefine writing studies as it evolves over the next ten, twenty, or thirty years (on both sides of the border). As these networks evolve and grow into new ones, this collection will offer a map that future scholars may follow and adapt to suit the contexts and challenges that will be associated with this ever-growing discipline we call Writing Studies.

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Works Cited

