From the Editors: A New Journey

Successful journeys … require good company.

—Marcia B. Baxter Magolda

Greetings and Welcome!

It’s our pleasure to welcome you to our first issue of Composition Studies as editors. We are excited, honored, and humbled to be at the helm of CS for the next couple of years.

With Gratitude

We open this issue with gratitude. First, to outgoing editor Laura Micciche, whose steadfast guidance and careful stewardship kept both the journal and the editorial transition in safe hands. Laura’s tenure at the journal saw not only the publication of exceptional research, reviews, and designs, but many changes and accolades—among them the introduction of the Where We Are section, the 2017 Outstanding Composition and Rhetoric Journal Award for Inclusive Editorial Practices, and the innovative and creative cover art. She ensured our editorship began smoothly, and she shepherded the articles in this issue through the review process. We are grateful for her service to the journal and to us throughout the transition.

We would also like to take a moment to thank the Advisory Board members for welcoming us on board—in person and electronically—and for remaining willing to devote their attention and labor to the success of the journal. Bryna Siegel Finer, the book editor during Laura’s editorship, remains the book editor in ours; thanks to Bryna for agreeing to stay on and for the excellent slate of reviews in this issue.

Finally, we would like to thank the editorial assistants who have worked on this issue. Wafaa Razeq has helped set up and get organized as we prepared for this first issue. Her work ethic is unparalleled and her organizational strategies have helped us transition editors. Additionally, Yana Polikarpov was integral in the editorial transition and helped forward our digital vision. Yana has now transitioned off the editorial team, and we look forward to welcoming Emmy Boes to the team in the next issue.

Last, to the staff at UMass Boston who provided a tremendous amount of assistance with the arduous effort involved in relocating the journal from University of Cincinnati to UMass Boston: we are in your debt.
Our Journey

In 2022, Composition Studies will celebrate 50 years of existence—quite a milestone for a journal in a field which is itself not much older than that. We want to continue to celebrate and uphold the rich history of the journal and also continue to move it towards the future. We will continue to publish articles, book reviews, course designs, and Where We Are sections. In the spring 2020 issue, we will unveil a new section to the journal, much like each of the editors before us.

In looking toward the future, we see three changes that align with our aims for the journal in our editorship:

1. We will celebrate and promote collaboration within the pages of the journal. This obviously begins with co-editorship. As long time collaborators through research and writing, we bring different experiences, knowledges, and histories to all of our projects. And we see difference as a guiding concept for exploring what we know and what we don’t know. A collaborative spirit has long animated the field, and by encouraging it here we hope to celebrate the difference that collaboration requires.

   Therefore, we encourage and will seek out various types of collaboration beginning with the following: each of the next three years, the journal will feature a summer special issue guest edited by collaborative teams from the field. The first one, which will be guest edited by Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Samantha Sturman, will focus on corequisite writing courses specifically addressing equity, access, and institutional change.

2. The topics addressed in upcoming issues will continue to focus on researching in teaching, theorizing, and administering writing, and we encourage authors to take up this work in a variety of genres, modes, and/or media. Research into 21st century literacies has shown that a writer’s identity—both our own and our students’—branch out in varied directions and include multiple modes of communication. And while the identities, environments, modes, media and genres may be new, the motives undergirding the study and research into them are not. Through attention to text technologies, then, we invite authors to question and explore our field’s changing sense of identity—what it is or could become—whether they identify as scholars, instructors, administrators, writers, or all four.

   Additionally, we want to acknowledge and celebrate the range of artistic abilities people in the field bring with them by showcas-
ing some of them on the covers, so we will be seeking out com-
posers, artists, photographers, doodlers, and the like to create issue
covers based on their interpretation of the topics covered in that
issue. Stephen McElroy, who is an Assistant Professor of Arts and
Humanities and Director of First Year Writing at Babson College,
created this issue’s cover.

3. Part of moving forward means change, and for us, one of the biggest
changes comes in developing the online and social media presence
of the journal. We know that how information is circulated, dissem-
inated, retrieved, mediated (or remediated), and managed depends
increasingly on the ever-proliferating modes, media, and genres in
which reading and composing happens. We also know this means
a shift in how knowledge is produced and accessed. Of course, CS
already provides access to some of the pieces of each issue online;
we will continue this practice. We also hope to create a bigger and
more accessible online presence by being active on social media, by
maintaining and updating a blog on our website, and by hosting
the aforementioned digital, open-access special issues. We will start
small: in this issue, we are making all of the Course Design syllabi
accessible online so that the wonderfully developed courses can be
easily shared.

Our goal as editors, then, is to look towards the future by building on the past.

This Issue

As you will see, this is a packed issue! We have seven fantastic articles, a cluster
of Course Designs, five reviews, a review essay, and a Where We Are dialogue.
All of the pieces in this issue, in some way or another, present provocative
ways forward in the teaching and research within Rhetoric and Composition.

The Articles

First up is Grace Wetzel’s article, which argues for a unique pedagogical ap-
proach to creating multivocal stories—a layered feminist historiography, in
her words—by focusing on annotation practices of an archival text from the
late/early 20th century. Next, Kelly Myers addresses public failure stories as a
way to better understand unspeakable failures—that is, failures that do not
end in “success.” Amy Williams’ article focuses on an ethnographic case study
of high school writers as they prepare for college. Her study adds depth and
dimension to the understanding and study of affect in the teaching of writing.
Charles Lesh then shows how writing workshops, when designed with a sen-
sitivity to the locations and identities students bring into the classroom, can
open deliberative, “protopublic” spaces for students. In addition, he shares a model for writing workshops grounded in collaborative design, multiplicity, and attention to space and location. Amanda Sladek presents research from a mixed methods study of 111 first year writing students’ literacy narratives in response to a multiliteracies focused prompt. Her results suggest that the ways in which students understand literacy depends upon the topics about which they write, the definitions of literacy within their narratives, and their ability to reject the “literacy myth.” Next, Tyler Branson presents a micro-case study of public writing pedagogy and argues that in-class public writing activities can encourage emergent public literacy skills. His piece provides not only new methodological insights—further developing microhistory with respect to case study methods—but also interesting parallels with the protopublic spaces highlighted in Lesh’s writing workshops. And finally, Joanna Wolfe, Ryan Roderick, and Andrea Francioni Rooney, report from a comparative study of student perceptions about course document designs. Drawing on individual and collective responses to the design of two writing prompts, they argue that document design is a relatively “low-cost/high-payoff” strategy that can help with students’ perceptions of both the instructor and the assignments.

The Course Designs
The course designs in this issue cluster around various forms and definitions of digitality, including multimedia authoring, feminist multimodal composition, and Wikipedia-based education.

Estee Beck provides a critical and personal reflection on the design of an upper-level Writing, Rhetoric, and Multimedia Authoring course, one that fits uneasily among the Literature courses of the department’s curriculum. Beck’s rumination is helpful for learning what it is like to try—and then try again—to integrate multimodal composing into a culture and curriculum that is heavily invested in print. Beck finds, among other insights, that tactility—as both a physical sensation and as a concept—creates bridges for students among their other coursework, multimodal composing and—potentially—their work in other disciplines.

Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday and Sophie Watson’s Feminist Multimodal Composition course design includes a dialogue between teacher and student as a way to meaningfully reflect on the course experience. The course, a multimodal design, focuses on the intersection between feminism and multimodality. Students produced texts that centered social justice issues as a means to discuss the issues of ethics and accessibility in product design. Together, Fiscus-Cannaday and Watson were able to conclude that this type of course can provide opportunities for students to practice activism and to figure out who they are inside of the system of higher education.
Matthew Vetter and Oksana Moroz detail the creation of a first-year writing course that familiarizes students with the processes of knowledge production and curation by framing engagement with Wikipedia through the lens of Anne Beaufort’s five knowledge domains. Doing so allows Vetter and Moroz a multifaceted view of how a course’s design, content goals, and assignments can examine and develop students’ discourse community, subject, genre, rhetorical, and process knowledge.

The Where We Are Section

The Where We Are sections have previously taken up various issues in the field—#MeToo in the academy, Latinx rhetoric and composition, and HBCU writing programs to name but three. In this issue, we have a variation on a theme: the Where We Are stages a dialogue between two recently-formed groups—the WPA-L Working Group and the nextGen Listserv Team—both of which have been integral in (re)forming disciplinary spaces over the past year. We invited these groups to dialogue, not to rehash recent events of our (electronic) disciplinary spaces, but to share their thinking about how and why we make decisions about which disciplinary spaces to inhabit, reform, create, or leave. Borrowing somewhat glibly from The Clash, we were thinking of this as the “should I stay or should I go” question, though you will see that the groups have productively blurred the boundaries between those dichotomous choices.

The Book Reviews

The issue concludes with five reviews and a review essay on works that urge educators to think more broadly in terms of what and how they attend to language, networks, and communities. These topics include teaching reading in post-truth America, cross-border networks, the internationalization of US writing programs, sustainable WAC programs, translanguaging outside of the academy, and thinking globally.

As the quote that opened our editorial suggests, we know that successful journeys require good company. We are glad to be in your company on this journey.

MD and KT
Boston, MA and Denver, CO
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