

SELECTED ABSTRACTS

THE 1997 RESEARCH NETWORK FORUM CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

12 MARCH 1997
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The Research Network Forum, held each year in conjunction with the Conference on College Composition and Communication, is a full-day pre-convention event featuring plenary talks by established researchers and roundtable discussions of works in progress by experienced and novice researchers on a wide range of topics.

At the 1996 Forum, the Executive Committee of the Research Network invited the editors of journals in rhetoric and composition to publish selected abstracts of works in progress that have been accepted for presentation at the Research Network Forum. The following abstracts are among fifty or so works in progress that will be presented and discussed at the 1997 Forum. They represent the quality of current research in the field of rhetoric and composition, and they embody the kinds of research that the editors of *JTW* are proud to feature for our readers. For those who would like to comment on or inquire about these research projects, we have provided contact information after each abstract for your convenience.

Inventions: Literary Texts, the "Personal" Essay, and Collective Identities

My research seeks to recover the personal essay as a site of collective as well as individual identity and agency. In recent years the personal essay has sometimes been neglected, even maligned, as an apolitical genre inappropriate for teaching in composition courses. One route to the recovery of the personal essay involves a pedagogy whereby literary texts—often autobiographical narrative—interact with students' lived experiences and beliefs. Texts such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An African Slave*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, or Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women: Race Matters* blur the conventional boundaries among personal and collective, political and literary writings. In the Research Network Forum setting, I wish to explore the potential of a revised, expanded form of personal essay, both to link students' individual narratives with larger cultural identities and to provide a rigorous, useful organizational alternative to argumentation as a primary genre in teaching composition.

Marilyn Maness Mehaffy
Department of Languages & Literature
Station 19, ENMU
Portales, NM 88130
<mehaffym@email.enmu.edu>

Hypertext in the Postmodern Classroom

Hypertext proliferates the postmodern classroom as more instructors are authoring and using multimedia and hypertextual supplements. Students are encouraged to use programs and the Web as research tools. In addition, many are encouraged to write their own texts in the form of Web pages

or Hypercard stacks. However, many times we expect the narrative and cognitive strategies that apply to linear text to apply to hypertextual endeavors. In other words, we are still using a logical, analytic epistemology when we should be approaching hypertext from a metaphoric epistemology. As instructors we need to develop other strategies to help students interpret the hypertextual world.

In my presentation I plan not only to explain what I mean by the postmodern classroom but also to offer strategies and techniques through which instructors can help students negotiate the matrix of hypertext and create their own postmodern identities. Michael Joyce, in *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (1995), notes that hypertext is much like Calvino's vision of text, and he compares its narrative to strands of yarn in a quilt as he discusses its interweaving multiple narrative streams. I will examine how we can acclimate students to these interstitial links in the "quilt" of hypertext so that we can move them from a linear language and composition to a more "thick" intertextual one.

To demonstrate this process, I will use a sampling of papers and Web pages created by my students because these demonstrate the "linear-to-thick" movement in writing and thinking. In addition to these examples and relevant texts in the field, I plan on using my experience as the English Department Technology and Web Consultant at a midwestern university to explore ways in which instructors and I have worked together to make hypertext an important and useful classroom tool.

Alan I. Rea, Jr.
Department of English
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403
<<http://www.bgeu.edu/~alan/home.html>>
<alan@bgnet.bgsu.edu>

Talk Isn't Cheap: Folklore About Writing and Literacy Education

A significant number of projects in composition studies explore the nature of writing-based conversation in the classroom (Berlin and Vivion 1992; Bishop 1992; Chiseri-Strater 1991; Jarratt 1991; Shor 1992; Tobin 1993). Here, students and teachers might be viewed as members of an academic culture, verbally negotiating authority and mediating the diverse principles attached to writing in the academy. Still, in order to better understand the social forces which shape values about writing processes and products, we need to investigate cultural scenes occurring outside of classroom boundaries. Drawing on folkloristics, I examine how the act of writing gets told and retold inside offices and lounges, in hallways and dormitories, over cups of coffee or at kitchen tables. This everyday talk helps reveal "underlying contexts of value" (Mirskin 1995) which significantly influence the development of composition as a field.

The legend-like narratives, belief statements, proverbs, myths and conflicted dialogues spoken by writing folk represent a powerful academic heritage—a body of writing lore which teachers and students continually modify and pass on in multiple contexts. Such conscious and unconscious exchanges of knowledge offer insight into the nature of academic culture, and invite a deeper investigation of the complex intersection formed by "personal" and "academic" writing pedagogies (Elbow and Bartholomae 1995). Research which addresses tacit valuing within lore potentially transforms limiting definitions of community, and subsequently, how we will continue to teach and learn writing in the academy.

Sherry Cook Stanforth
Department of English and Comparative Literature
243 McMicken Hall, ML 0069
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati OH 45221-0069
<cooks@ucenglish.mcm.uc.edu>

Citing/Siting/Sighting Ourselves: The Canon in Rhetoric and Composition Studies

Over the next year, I will be investigating what factors mark the centralizing of core texts in our discipline. In *Beyond the Culture Wars*, Gerald Graff defines a canon as “the body of literature thought to be worth teaching” (4). But is that the only factor? Citations, invocations, and required reading lists are all markers of the apotheosis of a specific text. Which texts are canonized and why?

Now in its thirty-somethings, the discipline of rhetoric and composition studies has produced thousands of articles, books, conference papers, and bibliographies offering new knowledge in a diversity of fields and reflecting the range of research methods employed within those fields. But when asked what core or foundational texts all rhetoric and composition scholars, teachers, and students should have in common, the answers vary.

Donald Stewart thought we should all know Albert Kitzhaber’s *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850–1900*. Maxine Hairston suggests the text by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike: *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*. Andrea Lunsford regularly writes on the importance of Edward P.J. Corbett’s *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* and Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations*. These examples represent a dissertation, two textbooks, and a guide for basic writing teachers.

By the 1997 Research Network Forum, I will be able to present my findings about our canonical texts and will offer the following questions (or revised versions of them) for discussion:

1. What markers or indicators point to a canonical text in the discipline?
2. Do we have to agree across the discipline what the canonical texts are? Would Lil Brannon, Linda Flowers, Peter Elbow, and Jacqueline Jones Royster be able to agree on five core texts?

3. Are certain genre and specific kinds of knowledge marginalized as this canon emerges?
4. What are the implications for new knowledge in the discipline because of the answers to questions one through three?
5. If we developed a survey that tried to identify core texts in the discipline, what questions would and/or should we ask, and why?

Nancy Myers
Department of English
132 A McIver Building.
University of North Carolina Greensboro
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001
<namyers@fagan.uncg.edu>

Embracing New Technology: The Tutor's Role in the Networked Classroom/Writing Center Environment

In their introduction to "The Politics of Computers: Changing Hierarchies" (a section of *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies: Questions for the 1990s*), Hawisher and Selfe encourage educators to critically assess how computer use can "tie humans together in expanding networks of information and resources, joining teachers and students, providing electronic spaces for collaborative as well as individual electronic projects, and creating new online forums that are not constrained by the same hegemonies that characterize traditional classrooms" (276). Computer use changes the roles and the behavior of both teachers and students, which makes understanding the relationship between technology and authority important. A critical examination of these changes will enable us to plan for optimum learning.

Last spring I conducted a study in my own first-year college writing courses that focused on the ways in which new sources of power and student-centered change are generated in the electronic collaborative classroom. Classroom work was closely linked with mandatory writing center time spent in peer review/editing under the supervision of tutors who also attended the regular classes. We used Norton Textra Connect—the new networked version of the most popular word processing program specifically created for college-level writers.

I am particularly interested in how teachers and tutors can best facilitate peer review and revision in the electronic classroom and in the writing lab. In writing workshops in conventional classrooms the teacher conducts a discussion in which students read and talk about the texts of their peers to help them improve through revision. In the conventional classroom, drafts of text are coherent products with which writers and readers interact: they are typed, reviewed, notated, revised, and then retyped. In the electronic classroom, however, the distinction between drafts is less clear—the process of writing more seamless. Writers and readers can interact with segments of an emerging draft—our linear paradigm of attending to invention, arrangement, and then style dissolving into real recursiveness. What effect do these differences have on teachers' and tutors' decisions about when and how to incorporate peer critiquing into the curriculum?

Investigating the use of readers in the networked classroom, I am concentrating on how teachers and tutors can set up and monitor writing workshops that reap the "usual" benefits of collaboration *and* take advantage of the increased amount of participation and involvement reported when students write with computers.

Nancy Montgomery
Department of English
5151 Park Avenue
Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, CT 06432-1000
montgomeryn@sacredheart.edu

