

TRANSFORMING TWEETS TO FORMAL ACADEMIC PROSE: COLLEGE FRESHMEN'S INNOVATIVE WRITING PRACTICE USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how college freshmen at a mid-sized public university in north-eastern United States used Twitter, an anytime/anywhere writing technology, to support and promote the writing process by using tweets as a pre-writing activity. Two of the authors taught a joint course of First Year Seminar and Basic Reading in which the same group of students enrolled. Students in First Year Seminar used Twitter every week to input their ideas and thoughts about their experiences of the first year at the university with the goal of collaboratively combining these into a 'Freshman Survival Guide' at the end of the semester. The findings indicate that Twitter as a technological tool helps students generate ideas that turned into a formal written text by going through a series of traditional writing processes. In addition, it appears that the nature of their writing development is affected by authenticity, collaboration, effective writing instruction, and instructional support of technology use in academic context.

Keywords: College Writing, Digital Technologies, First-year College, Twitter, New Literacies.

INTRODUCTION

Moje (2009) proposes a call for new research on new and multi-literacies and suggests possible lines of research foci. One of her suggestions is the need of an extensive research study on digital text use and its effects on student achievement. In the digital age, students are using various writing technologies, such as e-mail, cellphone text messages, instant messages, weblog posts, and so on. Digital writing is a significant medium for students to communicate, socialize, and share information anytime and anywhere. However, does the use of these technologies help students acquire writing skills necessary for academic success?

Many teachers blame the decline in writing skills on the technologies that today's students are immersed in. For example, students' frequent use of text messages would have negative impact on traditional writing skills such as spelling and grammar. However, recent literacy research suggests that students' interest in digital writing is an instructional advantage if students can play active roles in producing information, rather than merely being consumers of information (Sweeny, 2010). New technologies such as

smart phones or micro-blogging via common cellphones may afford even greater authentic and meaningful writing for these students, providing an inexpensive, anytime and anywhere medium for jotting down notes. As more students have adapted new technologies of writing in their everyday lives, we should be looking at ways to incorporate them into traditional writing in ways that support and facilitate it.

This article explores how anytime/anywhere technology promotes the process of traditional writing, such as drafting, revising, editing, and publishing expository text for a specific purpose, by freshmen at a mid-sized public university in the U.S. It also examines how the use of technologies changes students' perceptions of new literacies in academic context. In the presented study, Twitter, an anytime/anywhere writing technology, was used to afford students' pre-writing process. Students were expected to post ("tweet") weekly ideas, thoughts, and reflections on their first-year experience at the university in a joint course of First Year Seminar and Basic Reading. At the end of the semester, students compiled all the posts, revised and edit them, and finally published a formally

written text, "Freshman Survival Guide." During this project, students had engaged in process writing: drafting information, revising the draft from classification of the information, editing the revisions, and publishing a formally written text. The following questions have guided the study:

- How does Twitter as an anytime/anywhere writing medium support students' pre-writing process, jotting down ideas?
- How does technology support the transition of students' everyday and spontaneous writing to formal and expository writing?
- What do the participating college freshmen think about 'new literacies,' such as the integration of new technologies into academic writing?

Theoretical Framework

New Literacies

New media, new technologies, and new literacies have been the popular issues discussed by educators. New technology inventions have entered people's everyday literacy practice and have affected how they read and write. There is little doubt that the composition of traditional academic writing has significantly changed with the advent of new digital technologies, such as online text, digital tablets, smartboard, weblogs, wikis, texting, and other digital writing tools. Today's students are proficient users of multiple technologies and the use of these technologies requires them to be problem solvers and strategic thinkers (Anstey & Bull, 2006). However, current educational practices may not necessarily recognize students' digital writing on a daily basis as part of the academic writing practice. Many educators agree that new lines of research must acknowledge and utilize these new digital literacies and apply them to traditional academic writing in authentic, purposeful functions (Alvermann, 2001; Moje, 2009; O'Brien & Scharber, 2008).

O'Brien and Scharber (2008) define digital literacies as "socially situated practice supported by skills, strategies, and stances that enable the representation and understanding of ideas using a range of modalities enabled by digital tools" (pp. 66-67). In other words, digital literacies can bridge traditional print literacies with other

media in ways that mediate effective literacy practices. The possibilities of digital literacies relate to the transformation of writing instruction that invites students to the purposeful and authentic process of writing. New Literacy Studies (New London Group, 2000) are vital to the discussion of new literacies as they propose that new and multiple media shape and influence what students do and how they engage in literacy practice across contexts for different purposes on a daily basis. They suggest that we find a way to bridge the gap between out-of-school and in-school literacies because students see these modalities not only as a social communication tool, but a method to accomplish 'real life' tasks. Overlooking this method and style of writing may be a missed opportunity to both improve and motivate students' writing. In addition, recent research suggests that new technology can promote the traditional process of academic writing, rather than simply replacing it with a new practice (Gallagher, 2010; Gibbons, 2010; Kuteeva, 2011; Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009).

Technology in Process Writing

The process approach to writing involves several stages in which students plan, draft, revise, and edit their work. Sandmann (2006) proposes five parts of writing process: "prewriting (generating ideas), drafting (getting ideas written down as connected text), revising (refining meaning), editing (focusing on form), and publishing (sharing the completed work)" (p.20). One technique of this traditional process that is often overlooked by students is that of generating ideas or jotting down thoughts before they actually sit down to compose the text. As noted by Stephen Leacock (n.d.), "Writing is no trouble, just jot down ideas as they occur to you. The jotting is simplicity itself-it is the occurring that is difficult." And it is this difficulty that we propose to address. During this pre-writing process, students reflect on and consider what might or might not be of use or interest to their reading audience, and collect bits of information that may or may not be subsequently used. It is a significant step for the remaining process of writing, but often a struggle for students without proper assistance. Once students draft their work, they then engage in revising and editing process that makes their work readable or publishable for real audience.

A great deal of research have documented the benefits of process-based writing instruction to enhance writing skills, develop motivation to write, create a community of learners, and increase students' awareness of text genre and real audience (Alvermann, 2001; Englert, 1992; Graham & Harris, 2007). Writing instruction in the digital age must integrate new literacies and skills in academic context, but continue to take advantage of the process approach to writing. For instance, a recent study by Pirbhai-Illich (2010-11) investigated methods to engage diverse students who were disengaged by tapping into their knowledge of digital literacies. The participants in this study wrote a collaborative six-page expository report, similar to the project in the current study. One finding suggested that adding instruction that used digital literacies in combination with print-based instructional texts and teaching literacy skills such as note-taking, engaged students while improving writing and text production.

Kuteeva's (2011) study examines how the course wiki helps to teach college students writing for academic and professional purposes. Students' written assignments like a formal report and an argumentative text were published on the course wiki through process-based writing instruction. The wiki was used to teach traditional academic writing skills like text organization and paragraph structure and to provide a collaborative environment in which peer feedback was encouraged and students' progress of writing was monitored. The results of the case study indicate that students become more aware of grammatical correctness and structural coherence as well as of their audience from engaging in writing activities on the wiki. Similarly, Wheeler and Wheeler (2009) used wikis to improve academic writing skills of pre-service teachers in an initial teacher training program. This case study also reports that the use of the wiki enhances students' academic skills and promotes the awareness of authorship and the development of text analytical skills.

Twitter, Anytime/Anywhere Writing Tool

Twitter (<http://twitter.com/>) is an example of the newly emerging social communication tools. "Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent

messages. People write short updates, often called "Tweets" of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile or your blog, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search...All you need to use Twitter is an internet connection or a mobile phone" (Twitter, 2010).

A user can post tweets either through the Web-based interface or by sending text messages, using cell phones. Unlike cell phone text messaging, users can micro-blog their ideas by dashing out short notes and organize their notes for whatever purpose they intend to tweet by using hashtags (keywords with a "#"). Unlike regular text messages, Twitter messages are posted on the user's Twitter website as well as on the home page of all those who are "following" that user - creating an automatic social network around that set of tweets, which can then be replied to/mentioned, re-tweeted/forwarded and put on others' "Favorites" list for their followers to see. Twitter has been introduced as a useful classroom-communication tool in higher education (Young, 2008). A professor who used Twitter in his college classroom reported that the "immediacy of the messages helped the students feel like more of a community" (Young, 2008). The popularity of Twitter in higher education is still growing as online discussions on effective use of Twitter have soared recently. Despite the rapid use of digital communication tools by students, little empirical research is available to investigate the effectiveness of integrating the social media into literacy instruction to improve student learning and writing in higher education, except Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010)'s study, which examines the effect of using Twitter on student engagement and grades in a first year seminar course. However, a recent overall survey of studies that examined student perceptions of mobile learning has found that it is overwhelmingly positive (Pollara & Broussard, 2011).

In the fall 2009 semester, the third author conducted a pilot study using Twitter, as an anytime/anywhere technology that students were totally familiar with (cellphone texting) to "afford" (Norman, 1999) students' note-taking on, and observations of, what it was like to be a 1st year student at our university. What she found was that students could write

weekly 140-character 'notes' but that without explicit literacy instruction, were unable to turn these into formal text (Wilder, Hong, & Mongillo, 2012). Therefore, in the current case study, the authors again explore the use of Twitter as a writing tool, but include it in a more formal writing instruction process. They expect that their case study is a timely addition to scholarly discussions around issues of new literacies and student achievement.

Methodology

Participants and Site

The authors teach at a mid-sized public university in north-eastern United States, where the majority of students are the first in their families to attend college, most coming from the surrounding urban/working class communities. First-year students at this university often enter without an adequate proficiency in writing and many are also required to take a remedial reading course when they start. In the fall 2010 semester, two of the authors taught a joint course of First Year Seminar and Basic Reading in which the same group of students enrolled. In First Year Seminar, students used Twitter to input their ideas and thoughts each week about their experiences of the first year at the university with the goal of collaboratively combining these into a 'Freshman Survival Guide' in Basic Reading at the end of the semester. Of the 19 students in the course, 6 were male and 13 female. Students ranged in age from 18 to 20, and represented Caucasian, Latina/Latino, African-American, Middle East, and Asian ethnic/racial backgrounds.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analyses incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was gathered and analyzed by examining how and when they submitted their writing samples as recorded by the Twitter system as part of the posting. Qualitative data was gathered and analyzed by examining students' revisions on initial tweets (individually and in group) during each stage of writing process. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed from the pre- and post surveys to document students' perceptions and use of new writing technologies in academic context. Qualitative data sources were coded for patterns and compared across

data sources (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The sources of the data are students' weekly tweets, the revised tweets by each student, the edited tweets in the same category by groups, the proofread tweets for the publication by groups, student surveys (Appendix A), students' expository writing samples collected throughout the semester in Basic Reading course, researchers' field notes, and researchers' email correspondence.

At the beginning of the semester, students in First Year Seminar met in the computer lab and they were guided in setting up a Twitter account. They were then instructed, as part of a graded assignment, to submit at least two tweets each week which would help other first-year students at the university survive. The tweets were prefaced with a unique hashtag that would make them easily searched for (the authors did not want to 'follow' the students or read any personal tweets they posted). Students were reminded of the Twitter assignments each week in both courses.

The instructor of First Year Seminar collated all the tweets and sent them to the instructor of Basic Reading for writing instruction. Students were instructed to revise their own weekly tweets in Basic Reading Course to make them into formal writing that includes proper use of words, spelling and grammar. Students were invited to brainstorm how to revise their twitter postings, which are informal and spontaneous, and discuss what kinds of writing conventions are important to apply for expository text. The revised tweets were compiled and classified by adding categories that describe their tweets, such as food, health, campus life, parking, and so on. The instructor of Basic Reading compiled the individually revised tweets with categories and removed the identification of student names from each tweet. There were about 18-20 categories created by students, such as emails, parking, club, free time, health, success and so on. From the whole class discussion, the class decided to narrow down their choices into 6 categories. They are social and goal setting, study and homework, class, food and health, parking and dorm, and campus life in general.

For editing process, students were grouped to edit tweets in the same category and were instructed to use the tweets as ideas to fill in those sections for the Freshman Survival

Guide. For example, one group of three students edited the tweets that belonged to food and health. Another group edited the tweets categorized as study and homework. In this stage, each group decided to remove duplicate and irrelevant tips from the list. During the proofreading process, students were re-grouped to work on other categories that were different from the ones they edited. Both instructors assisted students to finalize their work to publish, using MS Office Publisher. Students then worked on the final draft by creating a cover page and adding graphics. Student surveys on technology and writing were provided at the beginning and the end of the semester.

Findings

Twitter as an Anytime/Anywhere Writing Tool

Over the 11 1/2 week period, 363 tweets had been posted by the 19 students. The total number of tweets for a student ranged from 8 to 24, with a class average of 19.11 tweets (SD=4.1). Female students posted an average of 19.15 total tweets (SD=4.7), while the male students average total tweets was 19 (SD=2.0). When looking at the technologies that students used to post their tweets (as reported by the Twitter system), the overwhelming choice was via a computer browsing to the Twitter website (77%), with only 1% submitted by cellphone texting, and 22% submitted by a mobile web application (Twitter for Android, Twitter for BlackBerry or ÜberTwitter).

When looking at date and time posting data recorded by the Twitter system (Figure 1), it was noticed that both web and cellphone users were much more likely to post on Wednesdays between noon and 4:00pm (when their Basic Reading class met in a computer lab). This would indicate that even the students who were using an anytime/anywhere technology (cellphone texting or app) were not doing the assignment anytime/anywhere, although there was a greater tendency for them to post in the mornings (between 8:00am and noon) as compared to students who were using the website. Students using the website had a slightly greater tendency to post on Mondays, between 4:00 and 8:00pm, following their Basic Reading class (which did not meet in a computer lab, but when students were reminded of the assignment). In other words, students posted their tweets at times when they are

most likely to be seated at a computer and working on their school assignments.

The Writing Process

In order to answer the research question that asked how technology supports the transition of students' everyday and spontaneous writing to formal and expository writing, we analyzed the participants' work completed during the revision and editing processes (revision, classification, and group editing).

Revision of Twitter Postings

We found that when asked to revise their own twitter postings, most students paid attention to the following features of writing conventions:

- Use a complete sentence.
- Check misspelling and grammar (i.e. its to it is.. your to you are).
- Capitalize the first letter of a sentence.
- Get rid of emoticons or abbreviations, such as lol, =D, :, @, 2 go, b4, etc.
- Add punctuations (commas, periods, exclamation

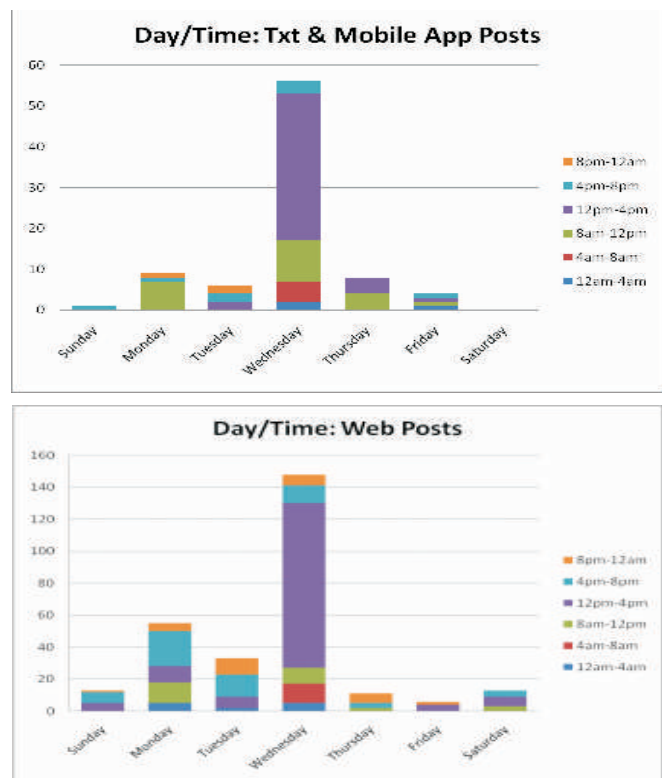


Figure 1. Days and Times of Twitter Postings

points, and so on).

- Revise the original tips by adding more detailed information or making them more accurate.
- Change word choices.
- Rephrase a sentence for formal or written text.
- Shift the tone of the sentence from personal opinions to tips for someone.
- Add a logical reasoning of the suggested tips.

The categories (content, mechanics, details, and text structure) in Table 1 were derived from a state-wide writing rubric that assessed students' ability to write at the end of the high school. Revisions indicate that participants understood the difference between informal text writing

Category	Definition	Initial tweet	Revised copy
Content/ organization	Communicates intended message to intended audience	get to class on time!	It is best to get to class on time.
	Appropriate details and information	the bookstore is crazy	The bookstore gets crazy during the first three weeks of school.
	Logical ideas	Use time wisely	Use your time wisely don't waste time on doing things that don't matter.
Mechanics	Spelling	procrastinate	procrastinate
	Grammar	its not good to eat hamburgers everyday	Hamburgers are delicious, but it is not good to eat it everyday
	Capitalization	don't try out for a sport without your physical from the school doctor. i found out the hard way	If you're going to try out for a sport, schedule your physical before school starts; the wait list is long.
	Eliminate emoticons	Strombolis with sauce @ Sbarros are the WAY2GO	Strombolis with marinara sauce at Sbarros are the way to go!
Adding details	Add appropriate punctuation	don't miss classes	You should never miss any classes because you miss that day's work.
	Elaborating on ideas	choose good influential friends	Choose good influential friends that will support you with your school work.
Text structure	Word choice	out side	Outdoors
	Shift tone from narrative to expository text	never again will i eat Burger King from the commons, it was so disgusting. I DO NOT RECOMMEND IT!!! (BLAAHHH)	The Burger King at the University commons is disgusting.

Adapted from the NJHSPA (2010)

Table 1. Examples of Revisions

and academic writing. They revised brief sentences to standard language by using formal language, for example, "get to class on time!" was changed to "It is best to get to class on time." This revision also shows that they had a sense of their intended audience. Similarly they understood that the text structure is different when formally addressing their audience, and they shifted their tone from casual to academic such as revising the comment, "never again will i eat Burger King from the commons, it was so disgusting. I DO NOT RECOMEND IT!!! (BLAAHHH)" to "The Burger King at the University commons is disgusting." Mechanics or basic grammar was attended to in the revision process as well, specifically punctuation, capitalization, and the removal of emoticons-all common practice in digital writing platforms. This finding suggests that the fear that students will lose the ability to compose an academic text is unfounded.

Classification of Tweets

When revising their own postings, students were asked to classify their tweets by adding categories to the end. The student-created categories were about 18. However, during a whole-class discussion, the class had come up with 6 categories after reviewing the set of tweets posted to date. Students were then asked to sort the tweets into bulleted lists under each category. Categorization of the information was an important part of the expository text writing process in that the ability to understand the structure of expository text heavily relies on cognitive classification skills (Williams, 1984). This can be an indication of the participants' comprehension of the main ideas.

41% of the tweets are related to students' academic life, such as study and homework (20.7%) and class (20.4%). Food and Health related issues are also what students liked to provide tips for (14%). 13.8% of the total tweets either do not belong to any of the categories or are redundant. Students deleted the duplicates or combined similar tips into one. The breakdown of tweets placed in each category is shown in Table 2.

Group Editing

The majority of the edits made by participants as they worked in groups focused on spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. This

Category	Examples	Total tweets
Social and goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose good influential friends that will support you with your school work. Don't choose friends that will lead you in a bad direction that will make you fail in all your courses. (social) Living is about taking chances and making the most of everything around you. Live it up while you are still alive. Especially have fun in college! (life) Join in many clubs that you are interested in. (club) 	37(10.2%)
Study and homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to stay on task and not procrastinate on homework because you will fall behind. (homework) You should get a planner which it helps your time management. (study) If you dorm and have problems doing homework, going to the library may help you focus. (study tips) 	75(20.7%)
Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should be always be prepared for your classes, not doing it at the last minute. (class: preparation) You should write notes in class because it helps on your tests and quizzes (notes) If you are absent for class make sure you copy someone else's notes that you can trust. (class) 	74(20.4%)
Food and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peanut butter is a miracle food; good on everything, a good source of protein and good for your heart provided you are not allergic! At Century Hall, there is little shop called "The W." The food there is very good, especially the sandwiches. (food) Eating healthy food can help you perform better in school. (health) 	51(14%)
Parking and Dorm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commuting is difficult especially when it comes to finding the perfect parking spot. (parking) Get a new roommate if get along with your current one. You will have a better first year experience by finding someone who treats you better. (dorm) Do not bring your whole wardrobe to school because there isn't enough room in the dressers. (dorm) 	29(8%)
Campus life in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going from class to the dorms is a long walk especially with the little hills. Though it is a good exercise for those who aren't active. (campus life) If you are coming to school early in the morning, look out for deer on the roads. (safety) You should always keep the I.D card with you since you basically need it everywhere. (I.D. card) 	47(12.9%)
Doesn't belong to any or duplicates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money doesn't buy happiness. (happiness) I enjoy reading the National Geographic website on recent science and news. (Leisure) I am so happy the semester is almost over. (no category) 	50(13.8%)

Table 2. Example Tweets in Each Category

was an appropriate expectation for this final stage of the writing process. Working in pairs provided a better chance to discuss about writing conventions and necessary elements to be included to write expository text. The instructor of Basic Reading grouped students and the groups are assigned to 6 categories that the class decided to use. Students as a group edit the revised tweets in a

traditional editing method, marking the changes on a hard copy. Each group used their own way of completing a task. For instance, one group designated one student to read aloud each tip while the rest listened and found a way to edit. The other group went over each tip and edited them as a team. Most of the groups paid attention to the following writing features to edit:

- Check misspelling and incorrect grammar.
- Add functional words (like prepositions, pronouns or articles) to clarify the meaning.
- Add punctuations.
- Capitalize first letters of the sentence and proper nouns.
- Sentence-level revisions: break down into or rephrase the sentences.
- Add logical reasoning.
- Re-categorize the information.

The following exemplifies the changes made during the group editing process:

- *Before edits:* You should definitely consider in participating in school activities, such as fundraising, attending concerts as well it's very fun.
- *First group edit:* You should definitely consider in participating in school activities, such as fundraising and attending concerts.
- *Second group edit:* You should definitely consider participating in school activities, such as fundraising, and attending concerts.

Analyses showed that the participants were able to transform their initial tweets into expository academic writing overtime using the stages of the writing process. The process involves several steps: first revising initial tweets, then editing the revised text in groups, finally proofreading the final draft.

Students' Perception of New Literacies

Results from the pre and post surveys were analyzed to answer the research question that asked, "What do the participating college freshmen think about 'new literacies,' such as the integration of new technologies into academic writing?" Participants' responses indicate that during the

course of the study they became aware of the possibilities of using new technologies as a method to complete some school assignments. For example, when participants were asked to rank the technologies used for school assignments from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest), a clear trend toward technology emerged. For example, in the pre survey 53% ranked 'pencil/pens and paper' highest as the form of technology they primarily used for school assignments and 35% ranked 'pencil and paper' as second (2). Also in the pre survey, cell phones were ranked as 0% in the highest use category, and computers as 59%. By contrast, only 35% ranked pencil/pen and paper highest in the post survey, ranked computers 35%, and cell phones increased from 0% to 6% in the number 1 ranking and increased from 12% to 18 in the number 2 ranking. In addition, cell phones decreased from the number 3 ranking from 65% in the pre survey to 29% in the post survey. These changes may indicate the participants viewed technologies more broadly after the twitter activity.

Further, when asked in the pre survey if they thought turning tweets into text would be hard, 59% were neutral, indicating that they may have been unsure of the efficacy of using twitter for school work. Comments from the survey support a trend toward an increased awareness. For example, comments written on the pre survey for this question stated, "Only able to write 140 words limited"; and "people don't want to post formal documents on Twitter they just want to chat with each other". In the post survey comments included, "It was pretty easy," and "It was easy to turn the posts into text because most of the time you know what you want to say."

Finally, the survey asked participants if they thought schools should teach students how to write using new writing styles and technologies. On the pre survey, 24% were neutral and 18% disagreed. On the post survey, only 6% were neutral and 0% disagreed. Also, only 6% strongly agreed and 4% agreed with this statement on the pre survey as compared to 24% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing on the post survey. The participants' comments support the finding that their perceptions of the use of technologies for academic assignments changed overtime. Participants made the following comments on the pre survey: "Writing is fine now;

students should already know how to"; "its good for the future"; "this style has been around for years now, no need for change." In contrast their responses after the activity demonstrated a better understanding of the possibilities new technologies offer for schooling: "It will help students understand the new styles and technologies for writing"; "It is good for the future; Students already spend all their time on the computer so they might as well use it; and; "Yes they should teach it -could help in the future." It is possible that these incoming freshmen had little awareness of the possible use of what they considered social technologies in the classroom.

However, their use of the word 'future' indicates that they understand that these technologies are here to stay and an integral part of how they will communicate in the future.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study attempted to bridge the gap between out-of-school and in-school literacies by creating a class writing project that used Twitter, an anytime and anywhere technology as part of the formal writing process. Findings suggest that Twitter helped students generate ideas that turned into a formal written text by going through a series of stages in the writing process. As asserted by Sweeny (2010), the participating college freshmen at first did not recognize their use of Twitter as writing and something they could utilize for schoolwork. However, writing instruction using a process approach helped college freshmen in Basic Skills program actively engaged in traditional writing processes. The use of Twitter facilitated the prewriting stage of the writing process, which is an area that students often struggle with in academic writing. In addition, students demonstrated the ability to classify the ideas that they initially generated via Twitter and sorted them into the specific categories appropriate for expository text. The study further suggests that digital communication tools hold a potential for developing collaborative writing projects and for motivating students to write.

Further the surveys indicated that the participants were unsure about using new technologies for schoolwork. It is also quite possible that they were not ready to accept the use of their social networking tools to complete school assignments. It begs the question, "Are educators prepared

and equipped to utilize these new technologies to improve school based writing?" Clearly the question requires further investigation. As the research has suggested (Gallagher, 2010; Gibbons, 2010; Kuteeva, 2011; Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009) we must find ways to promote the traditional process of academic writing, rather than simply replacing it with a new practice.

Appendix A: Survey

Please answer the following questions (front and back) by marking an "X" in the appropriate box and adding additional answers and your comments to the space provided.

1. Rank the following technology devices that you are primarily using for personal writing from highest to lowest (1 to 4).

_____ Computers (laptop/desktop) _____ Cell-phones
 _____ Pencils/pens & papers _____ PDA (palm computer)
 Any others with rank _____

2. Rank among the following technology devices that you are primarily using for academic writing from highest to lowest (1 to 4).

_____ Computers (laptop/desktop) _____ Cell-phones
 _____ Pencils/pens & papers _____ PDA (palm computer)
 Any others with rank _____

3. There are different kinds of writing for different purposes.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

4. Twitter is an easy way to submit my weekly thoughts and suggestions.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

5. I would have preferred to use a totally different technology (please specify below) to submit my weekly ideas.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Which technology, and why?

6. It is important to be able to write down ideas whenever and wherever they occur to me.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

7. Editing is an important part of formal documents.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

8. What kinds of support do you use to edit or improve your writing? Check all that applies.

_____ Writing Center _____ Peer-editing _____ Self-editing
 _____ Expert help (e.g. writing teacher, English major)
 _____ Spell/grammar check in computers Any other _____

9. Using Twitter posts or something similar is a good way to get started when writing printed documents.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

10. Turning Twitter posts into printed text (e.g. a formal document) will be hard.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

11. Formal documents must include the followings. Check all that applies.

_____ Correct spelling _____ Correct grammar
 _____ Proper words (not slangs or jargons) _____ Reliable information/resources
 _____ Appropriate text structure (e.g.

paragraphs, headings, punctuations, etc) Any other

12. Twitter posts, Facebook updates, emails, SMS messages are all valid "new writing" methods.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

13. Teachers should NOT use twitter posts, Facebook updates, emails, SMS messages, etc. for school assignments.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

14. Schools should teach students how to write using new writing styles and technologies.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Why/Why not?

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