Generating the Field: The Role of Editors in Disciplinary Formation

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Abstract: In the following conversation, conducted asynchronously through email, three current and former editors discuss the role of publishing in creating a disciplinary identity. Speaking from the academic (Villanueva), digital (Selfe), and community (Parks), and, often crossing these three categories, the editors discuss how the field has failed to fully embrace the full range of cultural, economic, and gender experiences that have been present in our field since its founding. In doing so, they also note that this absence has continued despite the ability of new publishing technologies to incorporate a wider range of embodied experiences, non-traditional knowledges, and literacy practices.

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Dr. Steve Parks is the current Editor of Studies in Writing and Rhetoric (swreditor.org) and one of the founders of Syrians for Truth and Justice (stj-sy.org). His early work focused on the Students' Right to Their Own Language, with a particular emphasis on the need to embed the politics of such a resolution into progressive community partnerships and publications. This led to his creating New City Community Press (newcitycommunitypress.com) in Philadelphia

and Gifford Street Press in Syracuse. Each press attempts to link university classrooms, local communities, and publishing in support of efforts to expand human rights. Currently, he is working with Syrian activists to record the human rights abuses of the current regime, ISIS, and militia active in Syria. His most recent work is *Writing Communities*, a book designed to support writing classrooms become a site of community collaboration and publishing.

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> - Cynthia Selfe

The Current Moment

It could be argued that at the current moment there seem to be more voices being represented, in more publication formats, to a larger pool of professional teacher/scholars in Composition and Rhetoric, than has ever been the case in our field's history.

And yet, having made such a claim, almost every clause of the previous sentence could be dissected, disproven.

For if there are more "voices" being represented, it is unclear whether those voices represent the embodied experiences of our diverse and heritage-rich teaching and student populations. If there are more platforms being enabled—print, digital, video—it is equally unclear whether our definitions of scholarship have expanded to recognize the possibilities of such literacy tools. Finally, although there might be more teacher/scholars in Composition and Rhetoric, it is not clear that that our publishing strategies are enabling the fullness of their collective insights to inform our sense of the discipline and of our classrooms. And if there is such a dissonance between our sense of ourselves as a field versus our practices as a field, where might we locate a possible lever of change?

The following transcript represents a conversation we have been having over the past year. It was a conversation that began as we each realized we were involved in editing, but that as our field is currently structured, we rarely interacted as editors. This led us to discuss how our editorial work was situated in the field at large as well as how we might imagine our editorial work coming together to support an alternative and integrated vision of our field's scholarly practices—while recognizing some of the hurdles such efforts might face. Based on this conversation, we conclude with a set of discussion points to continue this conversation about the responsibilities of editorial work in our field—discussion points that we hope will propel discussion among our colleagues about the role of editing in defining the values and priorities of the discipline.

And perhaps the most important conclusion, implied throughout but perhaps not stated, is our definition of "the field." What was remarkable in our conversations was how our understanding of this term had less to do with borders (the acreage which bounds our concerns) but with the possibilities of growth (what it might mean to tend to the land to produce consistent growth). Terms such as "rhetoric," "composition," "writing studies," for instance, are seen less as boundaries demarcating what counts, but as generative terms which if properly tended can draw together scholars for new conversations, new pedagogies, new ways of understanding our work. That is, we found the pressure of editing seems to produce a humility about the possibility of any term to mark "our field" and a desire to work towards greater collaboration across such framings, helping to create a framework which allows the broadest participation amongst those of us who wish to be part of a community interested in understanding the possibilities of language, of rhetoric, in all its manifold instantiations. And if that is all a little too idealistic, then we like to think, we are joined in this idealism by the thousands of teacher-scholars who daily impart such curiosity and desire for collaboration to students in their composition and rhetoric classrooms.

Beginning at the Beginning

Cindy Selfe: Before I respond to any of these questions that follow, I guess, I should make a note about how I, personally, understand publishing/editing as social/intellectual action within the profession. I think we all enter the profession within a complex context that identifies very specifically—both implicitly and explicitly—what is publishable and what is not, what ideas are worth pursuing

and not, what are "pressing ideas" for the field and what are not, what publications look like/what forms they should take and what they don't/shouldn't, what should be of interest and what is not, which publication are prestigious and which are less so, who should be published and who shouldn't. And each scholar, in the act of composing and submitting scholarship for publication and/or publishing their work and/or serving as an editor, has the opportunity to shape these understandings (to some extent, less so or more so) with his/her/their own labor (recognizing that these decisions have implications, both known and unknown). Sometimes a scholar's work challenges extant understandings; sometimes it sustains and supports such understandings; often it does both at once. In addition, such work always has both intended and unintended consequences. Professional contexts and systems for scholarly publishing are always over determined and, thus, resistant to change.

It is within this general context that I understand the role of scholarly publishing/editing. Thirty-five years ago, for example, when I started publishing my own work—often collaborating with Gail E. Hawisher—publishing/editing efforts in rhetoric and composition were primarily print based endeavors. Further, many of the print venues—journals, collections, presses—were not particularly interested (or, rather were actively un-interested) in work on digital composition. In addition, collaborative scholarship was often considered less prestigious/desirable in departments of English. From a self-interested perspective, my efforts were directed at addressing this situation—first as an author and later as an editor. Both Gail Hawisher and I believed it was to our benefit, as well as to the profession's, to change these practices/understanding: to publish more scholarship about digital composing, to inspire an interest in such work, to create more venues for this scholarship, to raise the profile of collaborative scholarly and editing work. I think every scholar/editor takes on similar, or related, tasks. Anthony Giddens, here, might point to a duality of structuration—describing the way that the publishing/editing context shapes our actions and understandings as scholars, and our actions/understandings as individuals and collectives, in turn, shape both our perspectives and the profession."

Steve Parks: I agree with Cindy that we enter writing and publishing within the field at specific contexts, within specific and dominant paradigms of what counts as "scholarship" in terms of content, style, and platform. And I can remember when my fellow graduate students, such as Jeff Galin, first began to bring digital composing, as a topic and form of writing, to our program. I'm not sure any of us, besides Jeff, understood its emerging impact. My own focus, at that moment and to this day, was on the disappearance of working class students from my classrooms - though they continued to be taught at community colleges. As I was working on the *Students' Right To Their Own Language*, I began to see that providing a "right" also required that we build the tools for those students to be heard, and not just the students, but their communities from which they drew their values and insights. In this sense, I have always understood publishing - on any level - as an intervention to insure those on the wrong side of privilege can collectively speak in their self-interest. As I've continued in the field, I have become more convinced that this should be a core value of publishing - not everyone, in fact, very few in our field have the privileged position of research scholars, but everyone in our field has knowledge to add, to bring to the discussion, to the future of our field. And like Cindy, I'm convinced that it is only through developing multiple platforms (print/digital) and supporting multiple voices (full time, part time, graduate student, student) that we can make any claim on valuing multiple literacies.

My initial foray into publishing was New City Community Press (newcitycommunitypress.com), which was an attempt to provide writing support and publication for Philadelphia communities, particularly the diverse working class communities in the city. When this first started, it seemed enough to simply publish the work of these writers, handing

them a book. As time passed, though, it became clear that circulation, distribution, were key elements. How to get the insights of a community about their cultural and economic rights into the hands of political leaders, cultural organizations, and the general citizen became a key component of the work. In that sense, I think I see publishing not so much as producing a book, but an attempt to produce, support, and expand an audience. Publishing, to me, has always been about change, about expanding what a community (or a profession) is allowed to talk about, see as legitimate knowledge. This means, at times, I've probably been more "advocate" then "scholar," but there is little use publishing a book if no one reads it. (And as a side note, I think we have become accustomed to academic books not selling, but I wonder, if this needs to be the case.) Since New City, I've done a lot of editorial work, but I think, the guiding framework still rests upon that working class experience - the sense that editorial work is about supporting unheard voices, expanding the types of knowledge, the types of writing, which impact our understanding.

Victor Villanueva: I walked into this profession during the orality-literacy debate (so long before the New London Group would add "multi" or the plural to *literacy*, not long after Cindy walked in). Folks of color seemed not to be responding to this orality-literacy thing, though there were many white folk addressing the inherent racism contained therein, as in the idea that being from an oral culture necessarily meant some sort of a cognitive deficiency. And on the literacy side there was also Paulo Freire and others from Education being addressed within rhetoric and comp. As far as I could tell, the folks of color were Geneva Smitherman, Keith Gilyard, and in terms of Latinos or Latinas, Richard Rodriguez, enough of a concern to me with his well-received assimilationist message to spark me into publications, quiet polemics. As Prendergast would say over a decade after my entry into the field, folks of color and racism were the absent presence. And so that became my focus: like Steve, to do what I could to have the silenced heard (I was tempted to write "to give voice," but voices can't be given, only expressed and maybe heard).

> *I think we have to consider the legacy of such consistent exclusion. To what extent should non-represented communities suddenly trust us when we (finally) say "We want to hear from you." . . . I'm not entirely sure that as a field we have listened and supported in our publications the diverse and complex reality of students, teachers, and researchers who come from transgendered, African American, Native American, and Mexican backgrounds, among others. My sense is we can offer to publish work on numerous platforms . . . but without that trust, "offers" will fall flat, be seen as patronizing. I think a building of trust has to occur first.*
> *- Steve Parks*

Why did you decide to take on editorial work as a key feature of your career?

Selfe: For Gail and me, editing always proved to be an exciting way to represent the many voices of the computers and composition community and to bring the innovative thinking of that community to the attention of the larger field of rhetoric and composition. Our editorial work was informed by our feminism, which valued multiple perspectives; the complexity of layered voices; and the richness of difference.

Villanueva: Well, I have to do some deconstructing here. Apart from heading up a number of book collections and a couple of special editions in a journal, I haven't done much "editorial work," and what little I've done has come late in a career, not exactly a "key feature," in terms of career (because "career" seems to me to connote things like promotion and pay and status, and coming in later in my career, I don't think being editor of the monograph series really added to any of that, or at least it didn't much matter to me if it did add to some sort of career trajectory). What's more, the decision to apply for an editor's post was specific to the monograph series I ended up being the editor for. Now, as to "why." My first serious national service work, about thirty years ago, was being asked to be a member of the *Studies in Writing and Rhetoric*'s editorial board (prior to *SWR* having a dedicated editor). In those days, everyone on the board read every manuscript, then we met to discuss. The learning was phenomenal for a young, insecure assistant professor. I learned about the biases (and here I mean more than racial) among some of the "big names"; I learned about writing, about what a "monograph" means; and I learned the matters being discussed, not only in the manuscripts we agreed should be published but in many of those we didn't. *SWR* became very important to me, even being a part of the process that appointed *SWR*'s first dedicated editor (being among the officers of Cs at the time). Yet, at the time, there was the problem of representation. And though to discuss and wish to affect racism and other biases must necessarily take place in writing and other classrooms, I could not help but believe that more general, more than comp-specific, considerations were warranted. I wanted to see a greater presence of rhetoric in the studies on writing and *rhetoric*. It was, then, with that in mind: a greater attention to rhetorical theory in discussing social-political issues that do affect the classroom, and being in a later stage in my

career, where I could, perhaps, offer help to young scholars/writers, that I decided to take on editing. And the task has been as rewarding as I hoped it would be.

Parks: It's a bit funny to me, at least, to hear Victor talking about editing being a late part of his career. While literally true in terms of official positions, I have heard for literally decades about how he (and Cindy) have worked with young scholars on their projects, supporting them through the different stages of such work, helping them to see how and why something should be published. And my sense is that each of them have brought those values of collaboration, kindness, and insight into their "official" editorial roles. And it probably goes without saying, but I would hope to bring such a spirit into any roles I might take on in the future. So in some ways, I want to say that many of us, as colleagues, as mentors, as editors, step into this role and provide the grassroots network that enables knowledge to be produced in our field.

My reasoning to move from this grassroots work with individuals – graduate students, colleagues, etc.—to formal positions has to do with my sense of how power operates in the field. I see publishing, academic publishing, as power node that has significant impact on what knowledge is validated, what scholars are promoted, and what students (graduate and undergraduate) will understand as our field. I think it matters who is an editor, who is on the editorial board, and what structures are in place to solicit and support manuscripts. I think, like Victor, I had concerns about how the current power structure was tilted toward some voices, some aspects of the field, and not others. Victor sites rhetoric; I might site community literacy as fields seemingly outside the network. I think we both might point to the larger issues of voices being given platforms to shape the field from multiple heritages and identities as common concern. Having grown up somewhat on the margins of power, having now found myself somewhat within the power structure, I felt a responsibility to continue to try to move things forward.

That said, I don't imagine myself to be particularly gifted at editorial work, to be nearly as insightful as the scholars who site on the Editorial Boards, review manuscripts, or even publish. I often think the most valuable aspect an Editor can bring is the willingness to do the work—doing all the backend work of putting an infrastructure in place to insure there is *actually* equal access to a book series, *actual* diversity of insights and heritages reading manuscripts, and *actual* broad representation of research and embodied experiences within a series. Clearly I think I can read and evaluate good work, etc., but I think it's this commitment to rebuilding nodes of power to open up possibilities that really draws me to this work.

What have been the fundamental changes you have seen in publishing in the past 25 years?

Selfe: From my personal perspective, the profession now seems to publish more scholarship about digital composing, recognizes that such work is fundamentally important to 21st century communication, enjoys more venues for this scholarship (and venues with increasing, reach, scope, influence), and acknowledges the importance of collaborative scholarly and editing work, especially, but not exclusively, in the digital realm. Much of this professional context has resulted from a changing zeitgeist that recognizes the increasing importance of digital communication/digital culture writ large.

In addition, digital environments and tools have placed the power of publication into the hands of individuals with the ability to access and to deploy computer networks, to leverage the speed, reach, and scope of these networks, their velocity. And, with these tools, I think editors and authors can often reach more people, more quickly at some points of the editing/publishing process. This situation, of course, presents its own challenges, problems, and—importantly—a new and complex set of limitations.

Parks: I'm not sure Cindy would agree with me on this one. It is true that digital environments provide the ability to respond quickly, to engage in debates of the current moment. As a field, however, I'm not sure that we have taken full advantage of this possibility. Old models of scholarship still seem to dominate. Consequently, when a significant cultural movement, such BlackLivesMatter, emerges, it would seem that we'd have a network in place to quickly produce a rhetorical/political analysis of the moment, intervening in media coverage, altering the nature of public debate. Yet, too often, this is not the case. Individual scholars might find a platform, but our field, as a whole doesn't. So I'm interested in what it might mean to create new forms of publications, ones that would count for "tenure," for "merit" which would be able to produce this quick response. Perhaps they are digital, multi-media (print/digital), or even short videos. My guess is they would not look like traditional scholarship, nor necessarily speak in that "voice," but I think at a time when all elements of the university are being privatized, when academic presses are being cut, we need to experiment with our scholarship so it can take this public stance, defending the academic space as a place for research that can inform public debate. (That last clause sounds conservative until you think about how radical such a space might actually be at the current moment.) So initially, I would say there has not been enough

fundamental change in our publishing strategies over the past 25 years. Or rather, the academic structures which surround it have not changed enough to take full advantage of radical possibilities.

In my own world, initially focused on editing community publishing but having moved to academic editorial work, I would say one area of important growth is the inclusion of community voices in our scholarship. Perhaps this grows out of the field's attention to the use of student work in our scholarship. In my experience, it had to do with truly understanding that there are intellectuals outside of the academy; that we are not the only academic game in town. (I think of the work of Chris Wilkey, for instance.) This has allowed a new form of academic book which is multi-voiced and, as such, draws together different communities insights. It is not so much interdisciplinary, but inter-communal, and, in this regard, has enabled our theories and practices to be refined and strengthened in their public purpose. Much of this work still exists as "print bound," but I'm very interested in how scholars, such as Patrick Berry and Adam Banks, are using digital technology to create community/academic publications in digital environments. In that sense, there might finally be a beginning to blending together what are now the separate realms of "community" and "digital" publishing.

Villanueva: When I was a graduate student, Anne Gere handed me every publication within rhetoric and composition: every issue of *RTE*, *CCC*, and *CE*. Those were our journals. I was able to read all—literally all—existing journal scholarship for our fields (I see two fields: one ancient, maybe even primordial; one not so old). And that has been the greatest change, both in print and digital: the burgeoning of media within which to publish, though rhet and comp possibilities for books or monographs seem to remain confined to the handful, even as one publishing house dies and a new one emerges. The textbook industry continues to flourish, but whereas at one time comp theory required the textbook as its medium (thinking of Irmscher or Witte or Young, Becker, and Pike), theory can now stand alone, be the subject of a monograph and find itself cited. In terms of content, Cindy is quite right: the digital has gone from being something that, at least on the surface, only she and Gail did to a central concern, as theory and as practice, in classrooms and in the world. But the presence of folks of color, LGBTQ, disability remains scant, seeming to be confined to "special issues" of our journals, not central to what we do. Just like we could once do with computers and composition, we can still all name the handful who do work on the Other. The presence is greater than a quarter-century a ago, but not sufficiently to be called a "fundamental change."

How has traditional and emergent publishing technology expanded (or failed to expand) the diversity of voices in our field? Why?

Selfe: In digital composition scholarly publishing, we've done a decent job, I believe, of encouraging scholars of all experience levels to contribute their perspectives. The many insightful voices, efforts, and perspectives of graduate students and junior colleagues, for example, have been central, necessary, and valued in *Computers and Composition* (print), *Computers and Composition Online*, all the edited collections of which I have been a part, and Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University.

We have had a more difficult time, and less success in many instances, in recruiting scholars of color to join us in these efforts—and, in conversations/consultation with colleagues from a range of communities, we need to identify why this is so and start changing our community practices, values, and perspectives in response.

We have also had a more difficulty thinking through and about accessibility in both multimedia/multimodal texts and digital publishing/editing environments: how do such texts and environments help *and* hinder the reading and composing practices of individuals and groups, how can we compose texts that are accessible as possible to as many people as possible? How does neurotypicality and ablism limit our thinking, our understanding, our teaching our scholarship, or editing efforts? Fortunately, scholars and editors such like Melanie Yergeau, Margaret Price, Stephanie Kerschbaum, among others are actively helping the community address this complex problem, contributing examples of best practices, related theoretical perspectives from disabilities studies, understandings from personal experience, and technical expertise.

Finally, although we have done a decent job of helping the profession value a range of publications about digital composing—from print-only texts to highly mediated video/audio/animated texts in born-digital environments—we have done a less than thorough job of helping teach colleagues of all experience levels to *produce* multimedia/multimodal scholarly texts. In addition, these texts are getting increasingly complicated to produce and demanding more skill with more technically sophisticated environments. Thus, while organizations like the NCTE, the CCCC, and the MLA have published helpful guidelines that specify best practices for evaluating the work of digital scholars; while schools and institutions are offering more digital-composing courses for graduate and undergraduate students; while efforts like Ohio State's Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) institute are providing scholars help in learning how to compose multimedia/multimodal texts; while individual publications like *Computers and*

Composition Online and *Kairos* are now affording authors with some help in preparing their scholarship; and while editors of digital presses like Computers and Composition Digital Press and the WAC Clearinghouse offer perspectives on best practices, these efforts are still way too few and far between. Thus, individual scholars continue to have difficulty keeping up with rapidly changing technologies, platforms, standards, programs, genres, and expectations, as Tim Lockridge has pointed out—all to the detriment, I believe, of the larger profession.

Parks: One of the goals of community publishing was to provide a venue for oppressed communities, often communities representing working class, immigrant, and African American/Latino communities. And if you look at the work of Ellen Cushman, Adam Banks, Ben Kuebrich, and Tiffany Rousculp, it is clear that important work is being accomplished - work that crosses print and digital platforms. Cindy is correct, though, that as a field we have done a much less successful job insuring our own journals and book series represent a diversity of voices. In many ways, we have completely failed. And in some ways, I would want to say this has been a conscious decision. Not conscious in the sense that bigotry has overtly held sway, but conscious in the sense of how we structure publications - the language, style, length, and platforms, we call scholarship—produces a white-washing of the field. If we believe that language is connected to culture, then we have to think hard about what culture we are supporting with traditional forms of academic writing.

And I think we have to consider the legacy of such consistent exclusion. To what extent should non-represented communities suddenly trust us when we (finally) say "We want to hear from you." When working with community writers, representing a higher education system which has not been their friends, there is always a need to build trust. You need to show that you are listening to them, to the reality from which their writing emerges. I'm not entirely sure that as a field we have listened and supported in our publications the diverse and complex reality of students, teachers, and researchers who come from transgendered, African American, Native American, and Mexican American, or Middle Eastern backgrounds, among others. My sense is we can offer to publish work on numerous platforms - platforms such as digital ones that promise an incredible space to demonstrate multiple literacies simultaneously - but without that trust, "offers" will fall flat, be seen as patronizing. I think a building of trust has to occur first.

Villanueva: *[editor's note: this interview was performed asynchronously through email]* You know, it has taken me a long time to reply to Cindy and to Steve—months. I could blame the workload, which remains as it always has, though my ability or desire to put in the seventy-hour weeks wanes. But I think I've been engaged (or not) in classic avoidance, not wanting to be a dissident voice with people I respect and like. An explanation: years ago, I had the wonderful privilege of being a leader within our national organization. A great part of what made that job wonderful was working with Cindy. To my mind, we made a wonderful team, as she advanced the presence of the digital within the organization, and I attempted to foreground the voices of those who tended to get heard only when we shouted (a strategy I didn't—and still don't—care for). Together, Cindy and I organized two winter workshops on the theme of Computers and Racism. But in the end, the theme became two themes. And I fear that that remains the case. I worried that I would be misread in responding to Cindy, mainly. I have no wish to diminish her position. I can't. She's right. But even though I studied Fortran and COBOL fifty years ago and ran a huge computer system back then (when the company I worked for bragged that the machine, apart from peripheral devices, stored 16K of memory, K, not GB), and though I find my way out of glitches and bugs when they arise, the technologies have never been central to my thinking. I continue to separate the medium from the message, Cindy (and Gail and all those wonderful people) notwithstanding. And though I'm grateful for the likes of Adam Banks, I still have to say that the great interest in the digital isn't there for me, even as there's no escaping the current, the digital wave that is our present and is carrying us into our future, grateful that there's a John Scenters-Zapico to address poverty and racism and xenophobia digitally, for instance, but I continue to worry more about folks *being* heard than about *how*, through which medium, they're heard. And this, I know, is my shortcoming.

What is the role of the editor today?

Selfe: I think of editing (at the level of a journal, an edited collection, a book series, a born digital press) as a way of curating the thinking of a field in a series of intellectual exhibits (in different forms, genres, media, modalities) so that others can see, read, hear, understand the thinking of a field, its scholars, and its practitioners.

Villanueva: I can only second Cindy in this. I walked into the role of editor with a clear agenda: foregrounding rhetoric to address the socio-political, things like racism, sexism, heterosexism, the global political economy. But then there came the manuscripts that displayed the concerns of the "field, its scholars, and its practitioners," and my job got defined for me: what Cindy describes as being a curator, a mentor even as I learned new ways of thinking about things I never thought to think about, helping, to the degree possible, to assure that the writers' and scholars' concerns could be conveyed effectively. I was both conductor and conduit. That, I believe, was my role/were my

roles.

Parks: I think curation is a key concept. I think as editors we step into traditions of work and need to respect the knowledge that has been produced, asking authors to imagine themselves in a collaborative conversation. And in imaging that conversation, editors need to be attuned to what it might mean to speak to numerous interests in the field, articulating a particular argument about community literacy, for instance, in a way that enables scholars in social media, cultural rhetoric, or basic writing to imagine they could learn and benefit from such work. I think it's safe to say that a lot of my own work has a particular focus on issues of political justice, but editing is less about moving an individual agenda forward than listening to the different threads emerging and understanding them as creating a tapestry—imagining it is possible to draw conversations together for greater understanding. Sometimes structural changes have to occur for that to happen—maybe we need a new type of loom—but I think that is the work of an editor.

What is the role of an editor in shaping the issues in the profession, of mentoring new writers into the profession?

Selfe: Editors perform a whole bunch of roles: encouraging scholars to publish their best work; creating journals, books series, and presses as venues within which scholars can represent their work; gathering together some of the best minds in the field to review and respond to scholarship in an effort to make that work the very best it can be; helping to document, in an historical sense, the broad arc and sweep of an intellectual community and what it is thinking and understanding at any given moment of history.

Villanueva: I think I answered this. A significant part of the job of editor has been in the mentoring, mentoring the writers whose work would see print in the series I edited, mentoring those who might not. Mentoring—which includes clarifying expectations, guiding research and scholarship, providing feedback—is the job at hand in editor, being as much a mentor to the seasoned scholar as to the novice. And I know that mentoring is reciprocal: my being willing to be mentored by what I read. Mentoring, by act and example, finally underscores the job, as I see it. And those acts and examples must be reflected, demonstrated, in being an active, respected scholar, a conscious writer, and a careful reader, willing to "listen" to the perspectives offered in what I read.

Parks: I think Cindy and Victor has said it exactly right. My only addition might be that there is a need to endlessly vigilant that as a field, as a system that produces knowledge and teaching, we have created avenues which actively encourage a broad set of scholars to feel encouraged to be part of the conversation. I think it is that initial belief that the field wants to hear about this issue, from this voice, which opens up the possibility of mentorship. So perhaps one of the key roles of editors is to be seen as working for such open structures to exist.

What are the pressing issues in new and old technologies going forward?

Selfe: This is a big question. I guess, for me, the biggest benefit of communication technologies and networks is that they can help us connect individuals and help scholars undertake their creative efforts and investigations. And so, in digital contexts, I see us leveraging digital composing technologies to encourage, sustain, and support human inquiry and creativity, and to communicate our thinking/understanding on multiple semiotic channels to increasing numbers of folks. Digital tools are being invented every day that *could* help us with these tasks if we're inventive about using and altering them, careful about deploying them, and mindful about the goals of our endeavors in the humanities.

Parks: I completely agree with Cindy here. I don't, though, want to let my earlier comment about supporting a diversity of writers, of gaining their trust, be lost. In fact, I almost want to say a central challenge to the field is to make sure that the diversity or writing platforms, their ability to draw alliances, sponsor collaborative work, might be assessed by how well they are integrated into the diversity of intellectuals in our field. I remember early in my career, I was very interested in fronting a working class politics - sometimes more successfully than others. At those moments, I benefitted from the insights of individuals as Malea Powell and Carmen Kynard, of caucuses such as the Black Caucus and Latino Caucus. I think without the consistent pressure from the diversity of the field, a continual calling to account, that many of our hopes for the future of publishing will repeat the patterns of the past. That, I think, is both the hope and the danger of the current moment.

Villanueva: The technological is still so new, despite its ubiquity, that it remains a subject in its own right. And folks with an imperative to address the working class (including the working class who are our colleagues without the hope of tenure), racism, heterosexism, disability find such social matters to be of greater concern, global concern. One of my current graduate students, Mark Triana, wonders aloud (in writing as he prepares a dissertation proposal) if

questions of the digital divide, to the extent that they do concern the poor, of which people of color are disproportionally represented, remain ethnocentric (which isn't quite the right word). There is, he notes, a presumption of availability, given economic remedies, but on a world scale- that is too much of an assumption. If the graduate students I see are any indication, the media that is the message will be the body and the machine, not cyborg, but real people using the digital in the ways that Cindy has always championed but is far from realized.

Creating the Future

> But the presence of folks of color, LGBTQ, disability remains scant, seeming to be confined to "special issues" of our journals, not central to what we do.
> - Victor Villanueva

If the above conversation has pointed out the difficulties of how scholarship is currently structured and circulated, of the ways in which the "duality of structuration" has allowed and simultaneously disallowed a variety of insights, heritages, and platforms to enter our field, the question is how to address these concerns. The issue is how to move a conversation into a set of actions.

To that end, we want to propose the following, not as a set of principles or guidelines to be followed, but as discussion points for our field as it continually builds and rebuilds the structures in which our teaching and professional lives emerge as scholarship. Our hope is that our small conversation might become part of a larger consideration of the interplay between publishing, disciplinary identity, and social justice.

1. The authors and editorial board in any publication series should reflect the diversity of the teachers and students in our writing classrooms across the U.S.
2. Authors in academic series should be able to utilize the full range of community and scholarly voices (in spoken or visual forms) in their work. Scholars need to avoid the default habit of flattening the words of all participants into printed transcripts, thus depriving audiences of the data contained in paralinguistic gesture, accent, vocal emphasis and pace, etc.
3. Authors in academic series do not have to be located at a university or community college, but can be community-based scholars. Academic scholars should consider involving students and community-based participants in their work as co-authors or collaborators. These participants need the space to represent their own communicative understandings (in print, video, or audio texts), to speak back to conventional academic understandings. Scholars need to avoid conventional genres and genre expectations that might unnecessarily limit the scope of such collaborative scholarship.
4. Scholarly work should be structured to insure authors work can appear in print and digital platforms, whether exclusively in one platform or in a combination of multiple platforms. Scholars need to avoid conventional genres and genre expectations that unnecessarily limit the scope of multimodal expression.
5. Graduate programs should consciously prepare students to engage in multiple publication platforms; Writing Programs should support their non-tenured faculty not only being prepared to work in these publication platforms, but in the production of published scholarship. Graduate students should also be taught to "write with" community and student participants, rather than always "write about" them.
6. Editors should seek to publish work that consciously crosses over the divides between community and academic insights, print and digital cultures, and builds upon the diversity that has historically marked our field's teachers and classrooms, but not our published scholarship.

We look forward to you joining the conversation.

C SHARE