Networking Pedagogies for Professional Writing Students

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Two recent special issues in professional and technical communication journals, both edited by Clay Spinuzzi, focus on significant developments in workplace topographies. The first issue from *Technical Communication Quarterly* in 1997 concerns technical communication in an era of distributed work. The second issue from 2009's *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* addresses the impact of social software on the field of technical communication. Taken together, these two topics indicate a larger seismic shift in the ways that individuals work and live in the twenty-first century, a shift that is also reflected in how professional writing students are learning how to become professionals in the field.

This essay proposes that in light of what has been called the "new economy," we need to rethink some of the pedagogical approaches and theories we use to professionalize our students. While at one time the concept of experiential or situated learning was useful for maximizing educational possibilities, we have moved into an era where technologies, economies, and global phenomena necessitate a reexamination of the ways that students learn and can potentially learn. Students are learning in networked ways much more than they are learning from traditional pedagogical approaches, even approaches that incorporate technologies in the classroom. In what follows, I argue for a move from attention to the concept of situated learning toward what I would call networked learning, and I delineate networked learning according to four descriptors: horizontal, peripheral, nomadic, and independent. Such a move might allow us to (1) connect the classroom with what students are already doing in their own lives; (2) account for our current economic and technological influences; and (3) diffuse the conflict between academic and workplace interests, building bridges between these two interested parties.

Much of the foundation for research on professional and technical writing pedagogy is established on the idea of "experiential learning." Experiential learning theory refers to learning through experience or 'learning by doing' and is often discussed in professional and technical writing in terms of Lave and Wenger's "situated learning." Situated learning posits that "learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world" (Lave 67). Learning, therefore, happens in social situations and in the case of professional and technical writing, is supported from on the job experiences like internships and co-ops. Similarly, professional and technical writing pedagogy is grounded in case studies, simulations, and genre theory, which allows students to approximate the writing and thinking that they might do in an actual work environment. The move toward service learning and community engagement likewise provides students with opportunities to experience working with clients on 'real-world' projects. While it is still distinct from 'real-world' writing, such simulations do have rhetorical value. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré assert, "Writing is not a module that we bring along and plug into any situation we find ourselves in. Rather, the context constitutes the situation that defines the activity of writing; to write is to address the situation by means of textual production" (17). Approximating the rhetorical situation of the workplace in a classroom context, then, is the goal of much professional writing pedagogy.

However, academics and practitioners still conflict about how useful these classroom skills will be in the workplace. Gerald Alred describes a particular distinction between the ways that academics and practitioners are expected to think: "Generally, the goals of workplace professionals demand that they think in specific, practical, and immediately applicable ways; those of us in the academy must think in terms that are more abstract, conceptual, and long-term. It is understandable, then, that works that might be highly valued by either practitioners or

academics can seem entirely irrelevant to the other" (82). Other writers pose possible solutions to bridging this gap, including contributors to Barbara Mirel and Rachel Spilka's volume, *Reshaping Technical Communication.* Ann Blakeslee's essay, for instance, identifies areas where the workplace and the academy share common ground. She argues that both "share an important feature, the goal of affecting a world that is rapidly changing as it is shaped by new information technologies. For this shared goal, both cultures seek to influence the consequences of these technologies at the point of entry at which they are conceived and designed" (42). Technology as a commonality, though, is not necessarily a shared area of concern, as Aimee Whiteside concludes from her survey of technical communication managers, recent graduates, and programs. Her survey indicated that while forty percent of technical communication graduates felt that they needed more training in software tools and computer languages, only fifteen percent of managers agreed (314). In fact one manager commented, "Most desktop publishing tools can be learned in a few days…Good skills in gathering information and presenting it clearly are rare!" (312). Still, both graduates and managers identified different four common areas where graduates could have received more training: business operations, project management, problem-solving skills, and scientific/technical knowledge (313). While this survey was conducted seven years ago, many of these needs remain relevant, especially in light of recent economic concerns.

Distributing Attention in the New Economy

The gap between the academy and the workplace has always been a disruption in our field, but this gap gains renewed prominence in the "new economy" due to job shortages and changing workplace structures. I want to talk about two aspects of this "new economy"—distribution and attention—with an eye to how they intersect to affect professional development among students. First, the most obvious. The current recession has made it extremely difficult to find work, especially work in one's field of study. The situation seems so bleak that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently devoted a column to how professors can advise undergraduates who have had difficulty finding work (see Benton). But before this current economic crisis, new economic realities such as cutbacks, downsizing, exporting of jobs overseas, and more, were already coming into being. Following scholars such as Zuboff, Clay Spinuzzi labels this phenomenon an age of distributed work: "Distributed work is the coordinative work that enables sociotechnical networks to hold together and form dense interconnections among and across work activities that have traditionally been separated by temporal, spatial, or disciplinary boundaries. Networks, not hierarchies, are the dominant organizational form here" ("Guest" 268). Traditional hierarchical and insular ways of doing business have shifted toward more networked or rhizomatic activities. He continues, "work may resemble a process, but this work is performed by assemblages of workers and technologies, assemblages that may not be stable from one incident to the next and in which work may not follow predictable or circumscribed paths" ("Guest" 268). In such an environment, there is less of a focus on vertical learning—learning a specific skill in a specific setting (265)—and more on horizontal learning, or "learning across boundaries, including organizations, activities, disciplines, fields, trades, and settings" ("Guest" 266). Indeed, this mode of learning on the job is echoed by Thomas H. Benton's advice to be flexible and enterprising in looking for positions, even outside of one's own direct area of training.

Our recent woes, however, are just a magnification of a larger shift. As Richard Florida points out, "economic crises tend to reinforce and accelerate the underlying, long-term trends within an economy." "In this case," he continues, "the economy is shifting away from manufacturing and toward idea-driven creative industries." This is clearly in line with Florida's original proposal in *The Rise of the Creative Class,* including the claim that such idea-driven creativity flourishes in certain areas of the country, such as New York, to which large throngs of the creative class move, making it a hot-bed for creative industry and leaving other sites blighted, such as those in the Rust and Sun Belt states. While I would disagree with some of the claims of Florida's article, I do think it is worth considering is what will happen to the students who we are educating in these blighted areas. That is, how should we be rethinking our curricula and our preparation of professional and technical writing students in light of these claims? We cannot recommend that these students fly away to remote cities just because 'that's where the creative class goes.' We must think about how to prepare them to meet the economic challenges of their own region and how to rethink their professional skills in light of that landscape.

Coupled with the "new economy" is another economy—that of attention. Richard Lanham's book, *The Economics of Attention,* outlines what he sees as an issue with the information economy: attention is in short supply. We are so bombarded with overwhelming amounts of "stuff" that it is difficult to filter the vast amounts of information out there in order to focus attention—ours and others—on what is needed. Lanham explains, "Normally, the debate about attention as a scare resource is about what you pay attention to in a crowded field of regard: the problem of plentitude. Revisionist thinking is about *how* you pay attention" (262). The revisionist thinking that Lanham proposes is centered on creating tools that don't necessarily filter choices as much as

train the chooser—that is, tools that allow the chooser or user to think rhetorically about such choices. He uses the terms style and substance to delineate what we might classically call form and content, claiming that garnering attention from audiences is dependent on oscillating between those two influences.

However, the ability to operate rhetorically in the attention economy is inextricably linked to technology. Eric Gordon and David Bogen expand on Lanham's work in their article "Designing Choreographies for the 'New Economy of Attention,'" claiming that "emerging social media provide new methods for choreographing attention in line with the performative conventions of any given situation." Gordon and Bogen explain that our understanding of subjectivity is predicated on the notion of focused attention, "where the ability to focus one's attention is tantamount to proper socialization." And yet, as these writers continue, "the same new technologies and landscapes that cultivate a state of distraction are themselves directed simultaneously toward the cultivation of attention." What is needed is a pedagogical approach in which technology augments this oscillation between attention and distraction. Like Lanham, Florida, and Spinuzzi, Gordon and Bogen locate attention at the center of a new economic structure:

> Attention, diffused and de-centered, is the focal point of this new economy in which the force of symbols, rhetoric, and information design are displacing an order of industry and manufacture. The work of this 'new economy' consists, at least in part, in the design and implementation of special symbolic and rhetorical effects that provide audiences with options for how they engage in academic environments and situations.

While Gordon and Bogen's specific research centers on how backchannels can enhance the lecture or conference experience, we can easily extrapolate their work to professional writing pedagogy. Our classroom situations are often predicated on maintaining attention, which is difficult enough in a traditional classroom much less a computer classroom. But that thinking assumes that attention is equal to student intellect or to instructor success, when neither may be the case. What's needed is a new environment for learning that builds from what we know about this attention economy and what we know about the distributed nature of the workplace.

Technology appears to be the bridge here, as Blakeslee mentions, but not an understanding of the technical nature of software tools, as the technical communication students in Aimee Whiteside's survey seemed to want. Rather, in this case it is a technology as a rhetorical approach that both reflects and harnesses the networked nature of work and life. What I'm saying here is that the focus on situated learning is decreasingly effective as the distinction between work and life begins to blur. We can no longer see work as a discreet and separate situation that is only knowable through complete immersion. Work and life are merging with new instantiations of social media. Clay Spinuzzi, in his introduction to the *JBTC* special issue on social software, drives this point home in his discussion of lifestreaming. He defines lifestreaming as "maintaining a comprehensive list of events in reverse chronological sequence: such events have been used to provide ambient status information, build personal history, and create online identities through the accumulation of data about online activities" ("Starter" 255). But lifestreaming is not only about social activities outside of work; it encompasses all of one's life and is often used to coordinate both work and life activities. Another example that Spinuzzi mentions is co-working, or working with others in social settings outside of traditional office environments. Brad Reed explains, "Co-working communities, which combine the relaxed, informal atmosphere of working at home with the sociability and cost-sharing of an office, have emerged as alternatives for telecommuters who miss having person-to-person interaction during work." While telecommuting was hailed in the 1990s as a revolutionary means of getting work done and reducing overhead costs, it has not proven as successful as was hoped. Perhaps this is due to what Reed identifies as one of the reasons for the rise of co-working: "many teleworkers say they quickly began to feel isolated and that they missed having colleagues nearby to bounce ideas off of." Co-working provides a new kind of workplace environment that combines work with sociality. Formal co-working arrangements allow workers, especially start-ups and entrepreneurs, to purchase space in a common location. But before these formal spaces cropped up, people worked in informal co-working spaces such as coffee shops and cafes. Those spaces are still popular places to get work done while being in a social environment with others. These sites also provide opportunities to network with workers who possess diverse skills and talents, even those from other industries.

Lifestreaming and co-working are two different workplace trends that have arisen from the distributed nature of work, especially work with and among technologies, but also from the merging of work and life. As Spinuzzi, Hart-Davidson, and Zachry note, contemporary information management does not distinguish between work and home life (43). Thus, people are using social media "in support of personal activities just as much as they would for work and school activities" (Stolley 357). What we need is to design pedagogical approaches that incorporate and address these changes. In the remainder of this piece, I outline what I call

networked learning, or the learning that is currently happening among students in our classes, and I discuss pedagogical approaches or "networked pedagogies," which attempt to leverage the erasure of boundaries between work and life through new media technologies.

Characteristics of Networked Learning

Educational research defines networked learning as "learning in which information and communications technologies (ICT) is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources" (Goodyear, Banks, Hodgson, and McConnell 1). In this definition, connection and collaboration are most important, and the materials with which individuals interact are less so. Therefore, I am defining networked learning differently as learning that happens through interactions among individuals, sites, media, technologies, and materials. In workplace environments, professional writers operate in a rhetorical network that incorporates people, technologies, texts, and media. In these contexts, media and texts are just as significant, and a great deal of learning can occur as individuals interact with these sources. Unlike in times past, though, this network has expanded beyond the traditional workplace to include social and personal life.

The networked learning that is happening among students can be characterized by four descriptors:

Horizontal

To echo Spinuzzi, learning happens across boundaries rather than through vertical hierarchies. Such learning occurs, Spinuzzi explains, "as workers cope with continually changing arrangements" ("Guest" 271). Thus, horizontal learning is a type of networked learning in which individuals are constantly developing multiple skills sets, are shifting between multiple roles, and are learning from tangential parties and sites. In this situation, a student would not only be learning from a teacher, but would also be learning from other students, other media, and other non-academic sites, such as his or her work outside of the university. In my internship course, I often have students who make interesting connections and distinctions with their non-professional jobs outside of school. Another example would be students reading technical writing blogs or following tech writers on twitter in order to learn more about day to day responsibilities for such as position. And in the workplace, there are countless examples of professionals who are promoted or moved into supervisory positions and away from their educational training in the field. Some even leave the field for more enjoyable or lucrative positions, as I will discuss below.

Peripheral

Learning occurs on the edges of classroom practice. This goes along well with the concept of learning as horizontal. It means that students may be learning more from the peripheral or tangential aspects of classroom situations than the center of that site. Robert Brooke reported over twenty years ago that most peripheral discussion among students in classes was actually about the class itself in "Underlife and Writing Instruction." Students are now using social media outside of class to collaborate and share, creating impromptu study groups on Facebook and using Google Docs to share information. Even if students in class are not talking about class content, their talk is a form of networking in which those connections will eventually bear educational fruit in future classes or jobs. Student organizations often rise out of these connections, fueled by students who socialize with each other outside of class. I could probably gauge the success of our own student professional writing organization at Purdue by how well the students know each other outside of class.

Nomadic

The new economy necessitates that students go where they can for experience. Students are traveling far and wide for summer internships and study abroad experiences, including unpaid positions. After graduation, these same students realize that they may need to participate in even more unpaid or volunteer positions to become marketable. Similarly, there is a clear market for contract technical writers, which can require professionals to travel far and wide for employment. Even if those students choose to stay near the university or their homes, they often understand that their degree is very malleable and many take different career trajectories away from their educational background. I'm reminded of so many students with professional writing degrees who pursue their own businesses in order to do what they want to so, since professional writing is such an open career track. Perhaps this nomadism is a result of the nebulous definition of professional writing. One of the drawbacks to a major in rhetoric is that there isn't an official job title out there that matches the degree. A degree in rhetoric can be applied to many different

job situations and careers. Students become responsible for teaching themselves, for learning how to apply what they know to workplaces. We can connect the nomadic nature back to the sophists, the original rhetoricians for hire, who traveled around educating others and practicing their craft.

Independent

Students are gaining experience in more distanced ways, such as with virtual internships and through start-up companies. In these situations, like telecommuters, they are being asked to work independently without much guidance. Their learning, in these situations, occurs online and through outside sources rather through direct contact supervisors and established workplace environments. For example, a number of my professional writing interns in recent years have undertaken internships with start-up companies. Usually only staffed by one or two people, such companies often don't have an idea of what kinds of written documentation they need, relying instead on the intern to tell them what they need. Or because this is a start-up company, the chief partners have other jobs and are not directly accessible to the intern. This situation is becoming more common and is reminiscent of the scenario of the new professional writer at a start-up company that Sopensky and Modrey depicted in the 1990s. Beyond such entrepreneurial ventures, virtual internships are becoming more common and face similar issues. Brenna Leath details her own frustrations in a virtual internship, explaining that like in start-up organizations, virtual interns face the inaccessibility of a supervisor (7). Even work with not-for-profits can be similar to these situations, especially with cutbacks in funding and a decrease of philanthropic giving. Often, interns are working with one person or a series of volunteers. Thus, students are being forced to learn independently, or I would argue through networks of influence outside of a traditional internship structure.

Since these are some of the ways that students are learning about professional writing in networked ways, how can educators, then, leverage the networked environment to teach students to survive and thrive in the distributed workplace of the attention economy? That is, how do we teach the skills that managers in Whiteside's survey outlined (project management, business operations, problem solving, and scientific/technical knowledge)? Without making the curriculum too vocational? Here are some possible ways that new media and networking technologies might be used to introduce students to career options, show them how to respond to challenges on the job, and survive the "new economy." I structure them according to descriptions of networked pedagogy. What sorts of educational resources can support the characteristics of learning listed above? What would this look like?

1. Networked pedagogy is social.

While we've moved beyond the banking model of education, we still cling to the professor in a classroom of students model. We haven't considered ways to teach across classes or through different social arrangements. Similarly, we haven't considered how outside parties, such as internship supervisors and co-workers, are functioning as educators. Nor have we considered how students educate one another, beyond discussions of peer review and collaborative learning. Finally, we have also been limited by our notion of education as a timed degree program, rather than seeing educations as beyond limits at the university. In the box below, I outline one possible way to enact a networked pedagogy in which students can learn from local networks of people through a structured program. But there are many other informal networks available for students using social media.

Networked pedagogy is a social model of learning in which students are learning from, with, and through others and technologies. Via ambient media such as Facebook and Twitter, students are able to keep up with one another, as well as learn from other professionals in the field. Those networked arrangements allow students to learn through updates, images, and conversations about what we might think are peripheral or tangential parts of a workplace identity. But in actuality, as Jeff Rice has observed, "online writing challenges perceptions of professional identity at the level of rhetorical work" (315). Rice discusses his fascination with a local Detroit bulletin board writer, Colby, and the massive amount of writing he produced about Detroit. Rice sees Colby's writing as contributing to "another type of identity of what professional writing might entail" (300). I see Rice, here, arguing for a more expansive notion of professional writing to include spaces that might seem to be outside of a traditional workplace environment. This means that participating in conversations on Facebook and Twitter contributes to the development of a professional identity. As we have seen, as home and work life merge through social technologies, the idea of a stable workplace identity is evaporating. In its place, social media provide a way to witness the development of professional identity.

As such, these applications can be invaluable for networking with other professional writers, students, and alumni from one's particular academic program. But it can also function across

programmatic boundaries to other programs, to friends, and even random strangers who identify in some way as writers. These networks of influence help shape how students can see themselves as professionals and what they can become.

Here are a few final examples to demonstrate the social possibilities of networked pedagogy. One trend among social media applications is for users to market a service to others, essentially adapting what could be a personal technology as workplace tool. One blogger uses her blog to advertise her daycare services, posting pictures and discussions of daily activities. Another Twitter user has an entire account devoted to her business as a consultant on job related resources. And new local business is doing something similar—advertising weekly specials and offering discounts for those who follow him on Twitter.

These enterprising individuals did not find out about how to use social media through their classroom experiences. They discovered these possibilities through the networked learning that was already taking place outside of the classroom. Thus, whether it is across classes or across media, we can engage students to think about how social media can be used as professional tools, both inside and outside the classroom.

Pedagogical Approach #1: Learning Across Classes

One approach to networked learning is learning across classes. Here, I profile one approach that a group of instructors took in our Professional Writing program to try to integrate a social perspective into our curriculum.

In the Spring of 2008, several instructors at Purdue initiated a pilot program called "Semester @SEA." The @SEA stands for Student Engagement and Activism. Students who signed up for this program would take several of the same classes together and work on a large scale community project across those classes. The goal was to approximate a literal semester at sea, in which students work and live communally, taking classes together, eating meals together, and working on projects together. While we had a more difficult time with the communal meals, students did take field trips together and used social media such as Google Docs to communicate and collaborate on their projects.

One observation that emerged was that the students who participated achieved a much-rounded understanding of project management and business protocol. Because we developed a structure in which some students were managers in certain contexts, participants were able to learn both horizontally and vertically through various roles and functions. Participants also learned a great deal outside of the traditional classroom as they worked together on this large project.

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2. Networked pedagogy is outside of traditional academic structures.

As I mention in the first pedagogical approach profiled, learning across classes, networked learning is a social method that does not necessarily take place in school. In fact, it more likely occurs outside of traditional academic structures, including traditional internship and experiential learning environments. Two immediate examples of how such networked pedagogy operates are virtual internships and volunteer opportunities.

Virtual internships are becoming more and more common in the distributed economy, especially as workers become more accustomed to working via email and through collaborative sharing technologies. But even in more traditional internships, much of the communication and work is getting accomplished outside of a standard workplace environment. Many internship hosts do not have the office space or technology for interns, so interns are working from home or elsewhere in a contract capacity. Like firms that offer co-working spaces, the idea of the workplace is becoming more dispersed and merged with everyday locations. In such structures, students are literally learning on their own, often through trial and error. I myself have been conflicted about such internships, wanting students to have more traditional workplace-based internship sites where they can learn from one another and learn workplace culture. But I also realize that the whole idea of a workplace culture is changing, and perhaps part of the learning experience that students must undertake is trial and error. As Brenna Leath details in her essay, she had a terrible time in her virtual internship because she couldn't communicate in traditional ways with her supervisor. Her failure, though, ultimately had a positive result as she decided to create an online guide for virtual interns, and she published an essay about her experiences.

This independent learning that students undergo in virtual internships is what led me to create the video project, PW Writing, which I detail in Pedagogical Approach #2. I realized that students needed to learn about the possible career tracks and what is part of a writing career outside of

the major classes and before they even took classes. The video resource allows students to be exposed to this information and take in what they need to make decisions about their career interests. While the project was undertaken by an academic and is housed on an academic site, I did not intend it to be consumed in an academic context. In fact, while I originally wanted to use it in class, I realized that a traditional classroom structure would not really support the use of such videos in class.

Other such projects have been undertaken at other universities, and with the rise of YouTube, I can see that what I would call professional education videos could be shared via social media more easily and efficiently. It would be a form of "grab and go" professional learning, where students could browse and consume what they want, when they want.

Pedagogical Approach 2: Mobile Professional Introductions

Two classic questions surface in teaching professional writing: introductory students regularly have trouble articulating an answer to the question, "what is professional writing?" Similarly, both introductory and advanced students often have a limited or even vague understanding as to what one can do with a degree in professional writing. Our major is intentionally designed to provide students with many rhetorical skills and career options, so while students do receive answers to these questions in their classes, they still have some trouble understanding the range of career options available to them and how to articulate their abilities to potential employers. Let me give one typical example: we have many students declare that they want to be editors, which is a great goal. However, most don't understand the skills needed to be an editor, what they might be doing on the job, the difficulty of finding such a position, and whether that career is actually the best course for them. So, my goal with this project is to provide students with actual models about what professional writers do—the kinds of workplaces they inhabit, the kinds of writing they do on the job, how they were prepared both formally and informally for their positions, important points about writing that they've learned, etc.

The project, then, serves as a web-based resource that students can consult both prior to declaring a professional writing major, but also before choosing an internship at the end of the degree. It is also beneficial for undergraduates outside of the major, especially those who take what we often call our "service" courses: business writing and technical writing. In this respect, students can see what kinds of writing are actually accomplished in professional settings, emphasizing the importance of writing and communication in any job. Finally, I see the project as aiding advisors to effectively track students into the professional writing major.

So, why use web-based audio and video? Naturally, I wanted something easily accessible for several different constituencies in a place that would remain relatively stable. I considered the lives of our students and the culture of the ipod. Most of my students have mp3 players and are used to downloading audio and video files. I proposed this project before the explosion of You Tube, and since then, watching videos online has become a regular pastime for our students. I also wanted students to see the variety of people doing professional writing in various workplace environments, which made video essential.

I proposed to interview different professional writers using essentially the same set of questions in order to maintain continuity in their answers. Some of those questions changed according to the position type, but they centered on the following main topics: primary job responsibilities, the processes entailed with one of those major responsibilities (such as writing a press release, software documentation, etc), formal and information training the writer received on the job, how their degrees prepared them for the positions, and any advice they might want to share about writing on the job.

My approach to selecting participants was influenced by several factors. I wanted to interview people in some of the professional areas of interest for current professional writing majors, such as editing and journalism. But I also wanted to represent the range of possibilities available with a professional writing degree, especially positions that might not have writing or a related term in the title. As I began compiling my list and interviewing participants, I made several important observations that shifted the project in some ways. (1) I started to realize that former students in the major—our alumni—offered some of the best information since they could articulate how their degrees prepared them for their positions and what kinds of positions were available to them. I also thought that such alumni would be quite credible to current and potential students in the major. (2) Another factor that emerged is that I wanted to represent the diversity of professional writers in terms of gender, age, race, location, etc. This was a bit more difficult than anticipated mainly because of a third related issue. (3) I did not anticipate how many writers I would have to contact and how many writers would decline my request to be interviewed (or would be too difficult to schedule). I think I had about a 40% success rate for those I contacted.

While I initially wanted to travel far and wide to interview various writers, I realized that such travel was not always physically possible and I realized that it might be better to highlight local or regional writers since most students are from Indiana.

As I was filming these interviews, I envisioned that the raw video would be around 10 minutes each and the final edited videos would be around 5 minutes each. Of course, once you get a writer talking, it's often hard to stop, and there was only one interview in the 10 minute range. The rest were well over that and more like 15-20 minutes. After speaking with several students and colleagues, I realized that this was a problem since most people would not want to watch such lengthy videos online, and the bandwidth required might be problematic for some users. Some videos turned out to be great, lengthy discussions between myself and the participant, but as such would be difficult to edit down to a manageable and accessible length. So, I decided to edit each video down to a short snippet that centered on a particular topic or issue. These videos could be much easier to use in classroom situations, as well as more accessible for users. The entire interviews would be available as audio podcasts that could be downloaded and listened to at leisure. Most of the final videos have turned out to be between 1.5 minutes and 5 minutes. The topics are varied and include email, taking initiative on the job, software documentation, writing press releases, research and organization skills, career options with the major, grant writing, or just general writing advice.

Initial feedback on the project from my internship students has been positive. One student told me that she wished she had access to such as site when she was starting in the major. While I haven't had a chance to assign the project or implement it at the very beginning or before the semester starts, I plan to assign students to listen and watch certain excerpts this coming fall when I teach the research methods course. More significantly, perhaps, is assigning the audio and video to students as they start to consider possible internships for the following spring. I've notified the advisors about the site and asked them to direct students to it as needed during the advising process. Hopefully, students will have a better sense of the career possibilities in the major and the kinds of work involved in those careers as they progress through their courses.

Finally, I see this as a project that could be continually developed and supplemented every semester. Our student organization, the Professional Writing Club, regularly has speakers on professional writing, and these talks could be videotaped and edited for the website. We also have writers as guest lecturers for classes, which could be another possible source for more video interviews. What I hope is that the site can be collaboratively kept up by fellow faculty and students in the major, continually revising and developing it as a database of models for professional writing students.

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3. Networked pedagogy fosters different kinds of writing.

A pedagogy that teaches students how to network, how to learn from others, and how to survive the distributed workplace relies on different kinds of writings. New communication technologies not only facilitate communication, but they change the kinds of communication in which people engage. For instance, whereas the memo was once the most common document that professional writing students could expect to compose in the workplace, the email has virtually replaced that genre. Networked pedagogy does not rely on "expected" genres in the workplace as much as it connects with the kinds of writing students are doing in their own lives. Josh Keller reports on the longitudinal studies on writing ongoing at Stanford University and elsewhere, observing that "the rise of online media has helped raise a new generation of college students who write far more, and in more-diverse forms, than their predecessors did." Such writing is perceived as more meaningful for students, even though its effect on academic writing is debatable. Scholars are harnessing this meaningful kind of writing in the classroom. David Silver encourages his students at the University of San Francisco to use Twitter, the social media application that updates one's status. He distinguishes between thick and thin updates, or tweets, explaining, "thin tweets are posts that contain one layer of information. thick tweets convey two or more, often with help from a hyperlink." Because Twitter only allows 140 character posts, the application encourages pithy updates. But Silver explains that he encourages students to post thick tweets in order "to teach my students how to craft creative, meaty, and to-the-point messages that attract other people's attention." Thus, Twitter makes students use a technology already familiar to them in complex ways.

Likewise, Jeff Rice tells us that the focus of online writing "becomes concentrated on responses rather than arguments, reports, or related professional genres" (297). Using examples from online discussion spaces like blogs, Rice argues that "we must focus on spaces in which networked writing generates relationships" (310). Speaking of the carnival blog practice, in which various blog writers post on the same topic, Rice reports that "these writers form associations with each work, use response as the primary compositional principle, deviate or keep close to

previous responses, and see their writing as a larger text" (311). In short, what Rice describes is a networked writing that is shorter, more concise, and in conversation with other writers and texts. Spinuzzi provides another aspect to this, writing that in the social software era, "like markets, professional communication can be characterized as a conversation in this space" ("Starter" 257). Spinuzzi's introduction to the special issue on social software notes that in this era, "new forms of information sharing become practical on a large scale." (253). Thus, new forms of writing the accompany that sharing must be taken into account in a networked pedagogy.

Along these lines, Karl Stolley outlines ways to use the social bookmarking application delicious as a project management tool in industrial and academic settings. This is even another type of writing—and thus sharing—of information in a public space. The social nature of sharing bookmarks online, even when those bookmarks are in service to managing a project, indicates that networked learning is all about sharing. Networked writing, then, is also about sharing and making connections among texts and people.

4. Networked pedagogy is mobile and immediate.

One differentiation between academic and workplace approaches is time-based. As Alred is quoted earlier as saying, academic time is more thoughtful and drawn-out, whereas the sense of time in the workplace is more immediate and imperative. The attention economy requires that content be accessible, portable, and immediate, and thus, our pedagogical approaches need to adapt to this time-based economy. Indeed, one of the complaints I hear from interns is that the writing that they do on the job needs to be produced much more quickly and less thoughtfully than academic writing (see Anson and Forsberg for an example of this observation). Students are accustomed to immediate production and consumption in their daily lives; they respond quickly to online conversions and comment immediately on Facebook updates. But their educational reality is one of long periods of time between consumption and production.

One of the aspects of the PW Writing project that I wanted to include was mobile media. Therefore, we chose to include podcasts of the interviews that students could grab and take with them on their ipods, and listen to them when they want. This kind of immediacy of media access is inherent to the networked nature of the distributed economy.

Similarly, rather than have students create their own electronic portfolios on independent websites, a channel on YouTube might provide students and alumni from a program with a more immediate—and findable—way to market themselves.

Conclusion

What I hope has become clear is that we need to rethink how we conceive of experiential learning in the distributed age. A networked pedagogy in professional writing classrooms must be predicated on what students are doing outside of class and must create the conditions of possibility for students to think creatively with and through social media. We must respect and integrate the type of writing they are doing outside of class—without making it part of the curriculum. That means we must also recognize that a good bit of professional development for our students in these times is going to be independent and out of our control. That does not mean we should adopt an uncaring attitude towards their futures; rather, we must realize that much of student learning is now happening in personal life spaces. The whole idea of work-life as creating a balance between the two assumes these are separate spaces, when they are no longer distinct. The key is how we can support the learning that is already taking place and foster innovative ways to capitalize on its potential.

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