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Adding Value for Students and Faculty with a Master's Degree in Professional Writing

This article describes an interdisciplinary professional writing program and its benefits for students (in terms of knowledge, habits of mind, and developing careers). The authors present qualitative research findings about habits of mind and knowledge domains of successful students, which may prove valuable for faculty teaching in similar programs as they consider curriculum design, or for faculty pondering issues of career development for master's degree graduates.

In the 2004 *ADE Bulletin*, Doug Steward chronicles a trend toward interdisciplinary and career-oriented master's degrees in the humanities. More recently, after describing the decline in undergraduate English majors over the past four decades, Thomas P. Miller and Brian Jackson argue that for English studies to survive amid changing economic, technological, and social trends, English professionals "need to look for other points in the curriculum where trends in the four corners of the field [which they theorize as literature, language studies, writing, and teaching] are converging at junctures where leverage can be applied to open up the curriculum" (695). No doubt the trend in looking beyond a traditional notion of English studies has gained strength, in part, because it responds to a perennial question: How can English studies prepare students for

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lives and careers outside of academe? Finding convincing answers to this question has concerned many faculty in English departments for years. Certainly, the intellectual habits of analysis, critique, argument, rhetorical awareness, and broadened cultural perspective associated with the undergraduate English major continue to serve students well as preparation for teaching careers and for a range of subsequent professional training in law, business, and even medicine. We contend that professional writing programs that open even more varied career pathways to students may provide an additional, viable answer to this perennial question.

Discussions about English MAs and the consequent program development of career-oriented degrees continue to be based on anecdote and generalizations about the wide applicability of problem-solving skills gained in humanistic study, rather than on hard data: "No existing reports address employment patterns for holders of the master's degree in humanities fields" (Solow et al. 30). In fact, the only claim we can make with certainty is that "[t]he historic employment patterns of humanities undergraduates support the argument of general utility of the undergraduate majors, but graduate degrees in the humanities have been closely linked to preparation for academic careers" (St. John and Wooden 103). Recently, however, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, along with the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Humanities Alliance, the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Universities, has initiated a long-term data-gathering project called the Humanities Indicators (Howard A14). The data collected should indicate career coherence, or the degree of congruence between education and employment (St. John and Wooden 100): the percentage of MA-seeking students in English who fail to complete the degree; the percentage who do not use their degrees by entering teaching careers or PhD programs; and the percentage who do or do not apply the intellectual habits and skills gained in English studies in career-oriented employment. Until the findings of this research are available, however, we can offer evidence from curriculum design and qualitative research of the career coherence that a master's degree in professional writing can provide.

In this article we discuss the benefits an interdisciplinary professional writing program has generated for students (in terms of knowledge, habits of mind, and developing careers) and for faculty. The thinking that led to this article began as self-reflection and conversations about the distinctive nature of our program, the students who thrive in it and the reasons for their success, and the promising students who do not reach their postgraduation goals and the reasons behind their disappointments. These discussions led us to conduct qualitative research using a grounded-theory approach (see Glaser and Strauss) about the qualities that lead to success in writing fields. As we noticed ideas and relationships that emerged during our research, we realized that our insights into the workings of our MA program may have value for others already teaching in such programs or for faculty pondering issues of career development for their own terminal master's degree students.

Intradisciplinary Design Attracts a Range of Students

As part of the trend described by Steward and by Miller and Jackson, in 1995 faculty from the English Department at Kennesaw State University, a unit of the state university system of Georgia, launched a Master of Arts in Professional Writing degree program. At the time, it was viewed nationally and in the state university system as innovative because the program focused on preparing students for a variety of careers as writers. The program was designed as an alternative to a traditional English master's degree, which prepares students for PhD work; to an MFA, which focuses solely on creative writing skills and talents; and to an MS in technical writing, which prepares students for a well-defined niche of the job market. The configuration of this master's degree is actually *intra*disciplinary because it brings three areas of English studies together under the umbrella of "professional writing": creative writing, applied writing, and rhetoric and composition. Students select one of these areas as the primary focus of their study; at the same time, they take courses in at least one additional concentration. The master's in professional writing attracts a range of students: those who have undergraduate English or communication degrees and seek advanced training that will lead to employment; career changers (often with previous educational and work experience outside the humanities) who need credentials as writers; working professional writers who want advanced training and the master's credential for advancement; and highly successful professionals such as JDs, MDs, and dentists who have decided that they want to make writing, publishing, or teaching a part of their personal or professional lives. The program attracts this range of students because it adopts a holistic approach to writing that links, rather than separates, the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of novelists, poets, rhetoricians, writing teachers, editors, grant writers, feature writers, public relations writers, and communications professionals.

Clearly, this professional writing master's degree does not constitute "an intermediate degree on the road that leads to the PhD" (Gaylord 1267). Rather, as Michael J. Giordano suggests, this degree program was designed as "advanced" or "self-standing," as a highly valued credential in and of itself (1272). For example, graduates of the program have used their degrees in a variety of ways, including pursuing jobs in publishing, writing, and communications positions in nonprofit organizations and corporations; freelance writing businesses; and publication of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Further, in line with Gerald Graff's vision, intentionally interconnected as they are, the three areas in this master's program "dramatize the interplay of rival perspectives on contested issues . . . [that] better represent the reality of intellectual life in English studies than any set of disconnected offerings can do" (387).

A Degree for the Workplace of the Twenty-first Century

What students learn to do in this master's program meshes with research claims about expert learning and predictions for ongoing success in the twenty-first-century workplace. The value of the master's in professional writing degree is underwritten by economic or workplace trends that extend beyond those of humanities education and academic program planning. This master's degree in professional writing has a record of preparing its graduates for the twenty-first-century workplace in which employment of writers and editors is expected to grow about as fast as the average—7 to 13 percent—for all occupations through the year 2016 (U.S. Department of Labor). But going far beyond this statistical claim, evidence for the viability of the field of professional writing can be found in trends that others have identified. For instance, Pulitzer Prize–winning columnist Thomas L. Friedman asserts in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* that workers need to "want to become really adaptable . . . to acquire new skills, knowledge, and expertise that enable [them] to be able to create value. . . . [K]nowing how to 'learn to learn,' will be one of the most important assets any worker can have" (239). Furthermore, some leading economists argue that job growth will occur in professions that cannot be defined by rules, that rely on face-to-face interactions, and that require the applications of expert thinking and complex communication (see Levy and Murnane 7, 9, 152). These criteria characterize the work of professional writers.

During their case study research for *The New Division of Labor: How Computers Are Creating the Next Job Market,* Frank Levy and Richard Murnane found that "[t]he skills needed to excel at expert thinking and complex communication—the job skills that will grow in importance—are . . . strategies for tackling problems that cannot be solved by applying a set of rules. And they are also strategies for helping others to make sense of many kinds of information to which we are all exposed" (156). Levy and Murnane ground their argument in Herbert Simon's prediction in 1960 that as computerization increases, a large percentage of workers "will be engaged in occupations where 'personal service' involving face-to-face interaction is an important part of the job" (qtd. in Levy and Murnane 7). The master's program in professional writing discussed here provides answers to two of Levy and Murnane's guiding research questions (157): "In an increasingly computerized world, what well-paid work is left for people to do both now and in the future?" Our answer would be the work that needs doing in numerous and various contexts by professional writers who excel in expert thinking and complex communication. "How can people learn the skills to do this work?" We contend that an innovative, applied master's curriculum can foster these skills.

In addition, professional writers belong to the ranks of the "knowledge workers" of the twenty-first-century workplace. In *The Myth of the Paperless Office*, Abigail J. Sellen and Richard H. R. Harper observed "knowledge workers," that is, those workers who make a living by producing and analyzing information and are "expert in making professional judgments about a specific domain." They note that "in 1995, 31 percent of the workforce could be labeled 'knowledge workers.' Predictions are that the proportion of work that is knowledge-based will continue to increase significantly into the new millennium" (51). Further, Deborah Brandt's ongoing interview project of people employed in "writing-intensive" positions substantiates the employment trend for professional writers in what Brandt terms a "knowledge economy" (166). Writers at many organizations qualify as knowledge workers. For example, Table 1 summarizes the key responsibilities and qualifications of writers at two nonprofit research organizations and one government agency; coincidentally, two of these positions are held by graduates from the professional writing program described here, and the other was held by a faculty member in the program who is one of the authors of this article. The "Key Responsibilities" column in the table shows that writers working within such sophisticated and contextualized organizations are often expected to acquire subject matter mastery on the job and to collaborate with other professionals who have domain-specific training in order to produce research reports, annual reports, media relations documents, and grant proposals. Notably, the qualifications that the employers deem essential are quite general in two of the three positions, emphasizing mastery of written and oral communication as well as graduate-level educational achievement, or its equivalent in work experience. Of course, the descriptions for both the mid- and senior-level positions imply that candidates will already have a thorough knowledge of the organization's culture, mission, objectives, and

Table 1: Position descriptions for writers at three organizations

Job rank & title	Employer	Key responsibilities*	Qualifications*
Entry level: Research associate, School Improvement Initiatives	Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA	• [W]ork[s] closely with the Director of Research for School Improvement on collecting and analyzing data and information . . . . • [C]ollects, organizes and analyzes data; • [R]esearches and prepares reports; • [R]esponds to inquiries • [C]ontinually updates and maintains information on specific topics; • [C]reates PowerPoint presentations; • [D]rafts and prepares correspondence; • [Completes] other duties as assigned.	• At least a bachelor's degree, master's degree preferred, with experience in education research. • [E]xcellent written and communication skills • [P]roficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, SPSS, SAS and Internet research. • [A]bility to perform statistical analysis, create worksheets and databases including statistical analyses desired.
Mid-level: Communications Analyst, Level II	RAND, Santa Monica, CA	• [H]elps research staff prepare straightforward documents and presentations [from level I description]. • Fully qualified professional, able to employ entire RAND product slate and the World Wide Web to convey the results of RAND's research. Helps direct proposal efforts. Participates in development of communications plans. Under supervision of senior Communications Analysts, produces corporate promotional material. • Helps enhance communication skills of RAND staff.	• [T]wo or more years additional experience in level I research communications. • Advanced degree, preferably in language arts, or bachelor's degree with three or more years experience in research communications, advertising, or related field • PhD . . . may qualify in lieu of some experience.

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Table 1, continued

Senior level: Southeast Museum Services Staff Curator	Southeast Regional Office, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA	• [A]ssists the Chief of the Museum Services Program in providing direction, guidance, and support for the museum management program in all Southeast Region parks and will carry out responsibilities in the four museum functions of research, collections management, exhibits, and education. • [P]rovide[s] broad-based guidance to SER parks to include technical museum collection-related assistance in areas such as accessioning, cataloging, inventorying, storage, exhibition, preservation, and funding • [P]articipate[s] in the preparation of museum Collection Management Plans, Collection Storage Plans, and other planning documents.	• Advertised at two position levels: GS-7 and GS-9 • GS-7 grade requires 1 full year of graduate-level education or superior achievements or 1 year of specialized experience to at least a GA-5 level • GS-9 grade requires 2 full years of progressively higher graduate education or master's or equivalent graduate degree or 1 year specialized experience to at least the GS-7 level. Basic requirements: A. Degree in museum work or in an applicable . . . field. OR B. Combination of education & experience (courses equivalent to a major, as above) plus appropriate experience or additional education. OR C. 4 years' experience that provided knowledge comparable to that formally acquired through the successful completion of the 4-year course of study . . . in A above. AND D. 1 year of specialized experience, equivalent to the next lower grade, that has equipped the applicant with the particular knowledge, skills, & abilities to successfully perform the duties of the position.

*Information is quoted from position descriptions provided by current employees.

products when they begin work. In fact, in the case of the park service staff curator, this information was omitted from the table in the interest of brevity. In short, these organizations, and we argue many others like them, need writers who are multitalented and flexible, but also highly attuned to the specific needs of the organization in serving its clients, collaborating with colleagues from a range of specialties, and communicating with key constituencies such as board members and legislators.

Also, studies of how technical and organizational writers spend their time show the necessity of interaction with others in order to research information for a project, collaborate on the development of a project, or discover how best to meet a target audience's needs and expectations in a document. In *Writing a Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators On and Off the Job* (Savage and Sullivan), twenty-two successful practitioners debunk the myth of a professional writer as a recluse working alone; often, in fact, the organizational writer serves as a valuable liaison between disciplinary specialists. The writer is uniquely qualified to recognize or infer conflicts and points of uncertainty in work projects, simply because the writer must put information together for others. Professional writers in this master's program are prepared for knowledge-centered and document-intensive work environments because the curriculum affords students opportunities to know, understand, and manage varied writing processes.

We would argue, then, that the master's in professional writing presents an alternative that augments the intellectual strengths provided by literature-based master's degrees in English or MFAs in creative writing. In addition, because faculty must be committed to making connections across subfields of English studies and into the workplace to advance this nontraditional master's degree, they can take the lead setting the course for the continual evolution of English studies. Indeed, the curricular design of this master's program anticipates Thomas Miller's definition of English studies as "literacy studies" that occur at "junctures where the discipline is enlisting new resources to connect with broader social needs" (153). Miller and Jackson note that understanding the discipline as "literacy studies" acknowledges "our expanding involvements with . . . new technologies, and workplace literacies" (702). It also exemplifies Bruce McComiskey's conception of English studies as the integration of "disciplines committed to the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context" (41). In this master's program, in line with McComiskey's notion, the three fields of writing are "substantially one yet sovereign enough to pursue unique subgoals and satisfy individual motives. They are both joined and separate; they are consubstantial" (41).

An Integrative Curriculum

The program's curriculum features courses (gateway and capstone courses as well as courses focusing on writing in a range of genres) and experiences (internships and research assistantships) that help students discover and pursue their identities as writers. The gateway course that students take early in the program is an interactive seminar that builds a community of writers as it introduces them to important issues that cut across all three fields of professional writing: contested issues about authorship, creativity, intellectual property, collaboration, the impact of technologies on writing, and entrepreneurial attitudes; and the processes that writers must master to see their work through to its final uses, including publication. As part of the gateway experience, students design writing projects that reflect their current workplace interests or future career goals in order to make connections between workplace and academic literacies.

Likewise, the capstone requirement enables students to conceptualize, draft, revise, and reflect on a writing project that will both demonstrate their mastery of their degree concentration in creative or applied writing or in rhetoric and composition studies and prepare them for their next steps as writers: to seek employment in the corporate or nonprofit sectors, to publish a novel, or to teach college-level writing classes. For example, one student entered the program after she had been an event planner and began to write for local proprietary magazines financed by the real estate and medical industries. By the time she completed her degree, she had established her own freelance business for these original markets and a growing list of local publishers. Another student entered the program in search of a writing credential after teaching overseas; he took classes in public service writing and corporate communications and did an internship in the development office of the university's college of the arts, where he wrote capital campaign case statements, brochures, and grant proposals. These experiences set him up for employment as a writer for a nonprofit organization after graduation, but in the meantime he discovered a talent and drive to write fiction. As he completes his capstone project, a novel, he intends to continue writing for an organization for his livelihood and for himself for publication and personal fulfillment. Another student came to the program after a decade of work as a corporate writer in search of ways to build her career and broaden her areas of expertise. She learned from composition specialists' research on collaboration and from poetry's attention to diction and voice, leaving the program better trained to write, revise, and edit speeches for corporate officers and with a new and more rewarding job at a larger corporation. Finally, a number of successful professionals sought out the master's in professional writing program in order to develop secondary competencies or careers. One dentist is gaining the skills to write fiction and to teach writing once she retires from dentistry, and one medical specialist, after retiring from his medical career, is focusing on fiction writing.

Taking a more expansive view of what a master's degree in English studies can entail suggests that we also need a more expansive view of the knowledge domains and habits of mind those students who succeed in professional writing programs and in jobs need. To show how students benefit from such a master's program, we draw on document-based video interviews with fifteen graduates and advanced students, who, though they have widely varying goals and plans for "using" their degrees, share attitudes, skills, and behaviors that enable them to find individual paths as active, working writers. In the following section, we share the observations that these graduate student writers have made about what has helped them learn, improve, and achieve as writers. The attitudes, skills, and behaviors that arise as common in the testimony of all the writers interviewed connect to the claims of researchers in composition theory on process and in cognitive psychology on the role of metacognition or self-reflectiveness. Across the corpus of data, we find that these writers' retrospective accounts corroborate what researchers claim to be true of expert learners generally and writers in context-specific studies of expertise. The writers who participated in the research study describe "expert writing performances in a given set of localized conditions . . . the specifics of contextualized writing knowledge" (Beaufort 9). Their accounts make it clear, as Charles Bazerman notes, that "expert performances in writing . . . [are] open-ended, ill-defined, and novel" and that "[e]xpert performance, or writing expertise, consists in no one single set of skills but varies over time and across social boundaries" (131). Likewise, the writers interviewed attest to Bazerman's claim that "how a person gives definition to an ill-defined problem is strongly influenced by the framework of prior knowledge the person brings to the problem" (135). Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia identify this ability to use prior knowledge to construct "knowledge-building schemas" as the way experts in one knowledge domain approach new knowledge domains that they need to master (169).

Knowledge Domains of Expert Writers

In *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work*, Anne Beaufort posits a model of the knowledge domains that expert writers draw that begins to illustrate how we think successful writers work. Beaufort developed this model from an ethnographic study of writers making the transition from school to workplace writing. The model designates five noun-phrased knowledge domains that writers must develop to produce a text: subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, writing process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and discourse community knowledge. In the course of her research study, Beaufort observed that "[t]he domains, both overlapping and distinct, existed in a kind of symbiotic relation to each other" (63–64). During the interviews, all the writers eventually discussed each of these knowledge domains and their ability to recognize and use them. Our contention is that successful writers have mastered these domains, but this mastery alone is not sufficient to produce effective texts or for writers to succeed in writing careers.

In keeping with Beaufort's theory of knowledge domains for writers, in their interviews all the writers discussed their grasp of the specific intellectual challenges they faced when working on a project. For example, one graduate from the program, Jeff Cebulski,[1] spoke in great detail about the discourse community he wanted to join—or his understanding of the various expectations and needs of writers and readers who take part in discussions about a subject—while working on a review for an e-zine, *Lumino*, about Tomasz Stanko, a Polish jazz trumpet player.

> I'm interested in the field of writing which I think is, behind the scenes, extremely competitive. [. . .] [T]here aren't a whole lot of people writing about it, but the people who write about it tend to be very protective of their turf. And there seems to be kind of an exclusivity in some ways as to who should speak for what. [. . .] Well, in this case I might think I have authority, but if editors and other people within the genre . . . don't think you have authority, then chances are you don't.

Here Jeff displays his grasp of the complex professional, insider community of music reviewers that he is trying to break into. He describes the necessity of establishing a reputation in order to have his submissions accepted within a group of writers and editors who already know each other and are used to working together. As the interview progresses, he explains that his awareness of what constitutes this discourse community resulted from a disappointment, an instance when he was sidelined in favor of an established member. Having pitched a good idea to an editor, he fails to get the assignment:

> I thought I had a lead to become a writer who would be able to write about jazz and to talk about it because I have knowledge about it. [. . .] As it turns out, early on it looked like it was gonna happen, and then it faded away, and then I come to find out later on that they took one of their staff writers and decided that he was going to address it. And the fact is that while the gentleman is a good writer and he has musical background, I don't think he has what I have. But yet they've decided to presume it because I'm not part of a clan.

Once he learns about how the discourse community of music reviewers functions, Jeff develops a strategy that does gain him access eventually:

> [B]ecause I'm willing to do some writing for nothing in order to create a portfolio . . ., then this opportunity to write for *Lumino*, which is an online magazine, developed. The genesis of that came from the fact that I was on another online publication mailing list, and [. . .] a young gentleman from that list decided to create this magazine. And he had read my material on the mailing list and thought that I would be a good writer. . . . I've become a contributing editor/writer to it. [. . .] [N]ow I've come to find out the agent for the label of [Stanko] has decided to use my article as part of the press kit.

Jeff's eventual success stems, in part, from his knowledge that writing does not happen—that is, become conceived, fashioned, or published—in isolation. Writers are published when they fit into a publishing community, a community with members, rules, and accepted routes of entry.

Another student, Lisa Satterfield, emphasizes her awareness of genre knowledge, an understanding of the conventions of a particular kind of text, in her interview. In the process of writing and producing a documentary for her capstone, Lisa describes writing within a genre that she had thought she understood only to realize that she still needs to learn some of its conventional storytelling techniques. For years before she entered the program, she had worked as a videographer for CNN. When she began her project, she felt that she knew something about how to weave the audio and video portions of a documentary together with a coherent, unifying script. Nonetheless, she senses that she needs to study this technique in more detail before she creates a detailed plan for her own documentary:

> Well, I've edited a lot of documentaries that other people have written, and I would have thought that would have really sunk in over the years. But I think I had always concentrated so much on the visuals and the sound that it really didn't sink in. And when it came right down to it, I wasn't sure how I was supposed to do it. So I actually watched a lot of documentaries, and I worked a lot with a reporter

> named Bruce Morgan. I think he is a lovely writer. And I looked at some of his older pieces, and Jeff Greenfield's another reporter I worked with, and I love the way he writes stories. [. . .] And I watched a lot of documentaries and it's actually a process of unwriting, I think, in documentaries because you're trying to say as much as you can in as few words as you can because you want the story to tell itself and you want the people to tell the story.

In this statement, Lisa shows how the process of reviewing and analyzing the craft of storytelling in documentaries provided her the genre knowledge she needed. Ultimately, she completed a PBS-quality documentary, and the foundation for her success was a comprehensive understanding of the conventions of her chosen genre.

These two accounts—Jeff's and Lisa's—demonstrate that expert information about the task of writing is key to achievement. Although we have not provided examples of all the knowledge domains Beaufort identified in her study—subject matter, genre, writing process, rhetorical, and discourse community knowledge—these two examples substantiate the claim that expert writers must be able to access these knowledge domains. But the excerpts from these two interviews not only describe the knowledge that writers must acquire; they also include a lot of discussion about how these writers use knowledge. We term the activities of putting writing knowledge into use *habits of mind*.

Habits of Mind of Successful Writers

Where Beaufort uses noun phrases to name the knowledge domains that writers possess, our interviews led us to believe that successful writers are able to put these knowledge domains into operation; we conceptualize this application as verb-phrased habits of mind. These are cognitive and affective expressions of the knowledge domains that we noticed as common to all the writers we interviewed. In other words, the writers put their knowledge domains into action by drawing on habits of mind.

Studies in other fields suggest that the development of expertise in professional practice relies on the development of expertise in learning. Consequently, the eight habits of mind we have isolated are likely characteristic of expert learners in general and of the fifteen writers we interviewed in particular (see Beaufort; Bereiter and Scardamalia). Table 2 defines the eight habits of mind of successful writers, as we conceptualized them from the interview data.

Table 2: Habits of mind and their definitions

Habit of mind	Definition
Persevere	Continue to work on a task until it is completed
Attempt challenges	Take on new tasks that may be difficult
Embrace learning	Have an interest in and read about or research new topics, issues, and ideas
Exhibit keen interest in subject	Enjoy thinking about the topics of one's writing
Collaborate	Understand the benefits and necessity of working effectively with others
Understand how to write in complicated contexts	Research, draft, and revise so that the views and concerns of editors, readers, and others are appropriately recognized
Respond positively to critique	Be receptive to comments about one's writing
Engage in self-reflection	Consider how effectively one has performed in past writing-related tasks and plan ways to improve

How Three Writers Use These Habits of Mind

One advanced student we interviewed, Jennifer Maciejewski, discussed a feature article about a local entrepreneur that she first wrote for a feature writing class. Although she intended the piece to be a feature article, it became a business profile, one that she thought "developed into a very nice piece" even though "it wasn't quite my original vision." Though Jennifer didn't publish this piece as either a profile or feature article, later she was able to "repurpose" it for another magazine. Several months later, she tried to do a similar article, and though it did not work out, she persevered: "They wanted another piece on another [entrepreneur] but I just couldn't get there, so I asked if I could write about [my original subject] instead, so they said 'yes' and I had that published." Because Jennifer felt strongly about the businesswoman who was her subject, she included her story in another piece about four women who are career changers. (After twenty years as a graphic designer, Jennifer's subject decided to do something much different with her life.) In her plans for this new piece, Jennifer shows that she enjoys attempting challenges and has a keen interest in her subject:

> For some reason I really want to do the career-changers piece so I can push myself to really try and get into the person more than the place, you know—why did you change and how has it really impacted your life—and really get them talking along those lines and push them to give me more.

In describing how she worked with the editor at *Atlanta Parent Magazine*, Jennifer reveals how she embraces learning about magazine writing and attempts the challenge it offers:

> When I first started with her, the "out and about" articles that I wrote as a little column started out being 550 to 650 words. [. . .] And [. . .] she's probably sent 500-word or more directions on how to do one as well as a stack of examples of ones that she thought were really, really strong pieces and strong examples. So I look at this, and I did the best that I could on the first draft. And that was one that needed a major rewrite. But she told me that the best thing when it came to editing with her was she would give me a list of "this is where I think you need to rework and this is how I think you should try and rework it." So I used her notes and agreed with what she had to say actually because [they were] very valid points. [. . .] And she really helped me get it structured and organized. And after one heavy edit session like that where she just critiqued everything, I got it, and it clicked in my head, and ever since I've been able to write it very easily and very naturally.

As these excerpts show, Jennifer calls upon several habits of mind as she develops expertise in writing: attempting challenges, especially when it comes to subjects she feels passionate about; persevering—she is determined to get it right; and embracing learning.

Writers at different points in their careers and facing different situations are likely to be more aware of other habits of mind. For example, Carol Ash worked for the National Park Service at the Martin Luther King Jr. historic site while she was in the master's program; she moved from interpretive work at the site to being an archivist and museum technician. Her capstone book project, *Sweet Auburn: An Illustrated Guide to the Martin Luther King Jr. National Park Site and Auburn Avenue Historical District*, was published in 2004. In the final term in her program, Carol was promoted to the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service in Atlanta in Museum Services. When Carol was interviewed, she chose to tell us how she is learning to write Collection Management Plans (CMPs). One habit of mind that stands out in Carol's interview is her enjoyment of collaboration as an essential feature of her job:

> These plans can be very complicated. They usually take two weeks to write a draft with the teams participating. So it's been quite an experience for me to be a part of the [team of] professionals who helped put these plans together. Usually what happens with one of these, a team is selected, and we get to the park [and] work there for two weeks evaluating what's already in place, talking with all the staff that are involved with museum management. And at the end of [two] weeks [. . .] the park is presented with a draft document that [it] can begin to evaluate and then to respond to, and then eventually after a number of rewrites and

> drafts that we have lots of input [into], it'll be signed off [at] various levels, and this now will be the document that will help us get money to continue to manage [the parks'] collections.

Here Carol explains the excitement she feels from not having to write in isolation:

> And what was nice about these CMP teams is people are brought from all over the country in these teams [. . .] experts in conservation and planning, archivists, I mean just really tremendous people many of whom I have never met.[. . .] It's just such a wonderful change from working by yourself.

Because the CMPs are complex and targeted to specific national parks, Carol's success also depends on understanding how to write in complicated contexts:

> One of the problems is many parks will have an emergency operation plan, but [. . .] most plans don't include the museum collections. You know they're concerned about structures and people. [. . .] And many of the teams are not trained on recovery of museum collections. And so these museum emergency operation plans become a part in the park's overall emergency operation planning. And it just makes the park more aware that number one they have important collections.

As can be seen from these two writers, certain of the eight habits of mind receive greater emphasis in any one situation though others may also be in play.

Another writer mentions one particular habit of mind more than others: responding positively to critique. Jennifer Cuthbertson, an organizational writer, describes the process of working with the editors at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and trying to juggle the needs of all the stakeholders concerning an opinion piece on teaching high school that she had published in the newspaper soon after she began the master's program. Jennifer came to the program after two successful careers that did not center on writing: crisis management for the Red Cross and secondary English education. At the time of her interview, Jennifer was a magazine editor for *Quilt* magazine; she has since become a communications supervisor for the Southern Regional Education Board. Jennifer's success, as she points out, drew on her habit of responding positively to critique from two editors:

> [The opinion piece] actually went through three or maybe even four [drafts]. . . . After I had [written the first draft], she came back, and she's a very good editor. I mean, there were great comments, and it wasn't [comments like] "you need to change this." [Rather], she would write questions out in the margin for me to think about, and then she would just write the things [such as] "this is the impression

> I get when I read this," and that really helped a lot and really shaped it, and so she read it and then [. . .] the editor of the *At Issue* section also read it. And his comments were more of "Well, what I want here is. . . ." But that was harder to deal with 'cause okay, well, there's not really anything there for me to think about. When she asked me questions it would start me thinking, and that's a much easier way to be edited.

This excerpt shows that Jennifer realized that getting published so as to reach an audience was more important than quibbling over turns of phrase.

Metacognitive Knowledge and Self-Reflection

One habit of mind that is implicit or explicit to some degree in all the interviews, self-reflection, is closely interwoven with a knowledge domain that our research has led us to add to Beaufort's model: metacognitive knowledge. By metacognitive knowledge, we mean to identify a self-awareness of methods of approaching writing tasks that the writers we interviewed exhibited and their ability to articulate and assess personal strengths and weaknesses related to these methods. By adding this knowledge domain to the model, we intend to suggest that self-reflection about the other five knowledge domains is characteristic of successful writers. The interview data show that all fifteen of the successful writers in our research study continually reflect on how well they perform and on how to improve their skills. Education researcher Paul Pintrich identifies three components of metacognition that these writers enacted: strategic knowledge, knowledge about cognitive tasks, and self-knowledge (220–22). According to Pintrich, "Strategic knowledge is knowledge of general strategies for learning, thinking, and problem solving . . . applicable across all or most academic disciplines or subject matter domains in contrast to more specific strategies from the disciplines or domains" (220). Knowledge about cognitive tasks refers to the recognition "that different tasks can be more or less difficult and may require different cognitive strategies" and where it is appropriate to prefer one strategy over another, that is, understanding the "local situational and general social, conventional, and cultural norms for the use of different strategies" (221). According to Pintrich, "Self-knowledge includes knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses" and the "self-awareness of the breadth and depth of one's knowledge base" (221–22). Being able to assess accurately what one does and does not know is an essential quality of metacognitive knowledge. We have found that when the writers we interviewed exhibit the metacognitive knowledge Pintrich describes, it is easily elided with the habit of mind that we identify as self-reflection. The metaquality of the act of thinking about cognitive strategies and the awareness of thinking about them are so interconnected as to be inseparable.

Jeff Cebulski draws on all these components of metacognitive knowledge in his account of the online article he wrote about the jazz musician mentioned earlier. Throughout his interview, Jeff demonstrates his mental engagement and his reliance on metacognitive knowledge by reproducing a kind of inner dialogue he engages in when he undertakes a project. In the excerpts that follow, he articulates his ethos as a writer and the strategies he used to solve the problems that his composing process, the genre, and the rhetorical context presented.

> Because as you write you think. And things begin to coalesce, clarify, and then you get to the bottom of this. And as I was writing the bare-bones interview, as I was just preparing the interview text, other things in my head began to start clicking. Association. Wow, that kind of sounds, he sounds like. And then, the creative work begins to happen. I wonder if I could actually do this? And so that's when I investigated the poetry. Oh look, boy, this poem—this is him. All right; good. How can I make, get these things together? And then all of a sudden I saw the parallel between what was happening in Poland during the Iron Curtain years to what happened to me individually. I got involved personally. And I said 'Do I dare?' And that's when I decided to go for it and try to construct this piece using the poetry as a trope, but also as a transition, as a connector.

Jeff continues re-creating his composing process by letting his listeners in on his conversation with himself as he produces a draft:

> I would say that was a forty-eight-hour period of time where all of a sudden you put everything else aside and all I'm concentrating on as a writer is getting this on paper.[. . .] And that's parallel to "Man, I'm struggling with this paper for a class and it's eleven o'clock at night and all of a sudden [snaps fingers]: Boom! And then it's all of a sudden two o'clock in the morning. Why? Because you're totally concentrating on the fact that you have something to say and now is the time to get it on paper and then to start working on it, to start crafting it.

The habit of self-reflection and the domain of metacognitive knowledge continue to be closely aligned and interwoven when Jeff elaborates on his concerns about rhetorical context in the following excerpt:

> [O]n one end you have your voice, you have your approach, you have what you want to say. On the other end you have these people who you have to deal with. You have the medium that you have to write for. You realize that there are people out there who have strict ideas of what you're supposed to be saying you're doing.

> And you fight it. I don't want to be intimidated by any of that. At the same time, you have to be mindful of it. And so all these factors come into play here in preparing yourself to write something that you think is going to be original and unique. But at the same time, it has a practical value of trying to introduce somebody else to other people and to get them interested in that.

Jennifer Cuthbertson also draws on metacognitive knowledge when she describes the process of working with newspaper editors and trying to juggle the needs of stakeholders represented in her opinion piece on teaching high school. In the process of looking back at the piece, Jennifer draws on metacognitive knowledge to show how she learned to benefit from developmental editing while writing the piece:

> I think back sometimes to this piece and [. . .] sometimes I e-mail to, you know, one of our freelance writers, when I look back and I go, 'Well, you know that's not gonna help her.' You know what would make me, you know, figure out how to re-write that piece best or re-write that paragraph. 'Cause we have a new freelance writer who's doing an interview series that I used to do when I was the assistant editor. So I'm real familiar with it, which makes me sometimes not as specific and explicit as I could be 'cause I know what it's supposed to be 'cause I did it for a year. So thinking back to that experience and what drew out from me the best response as a writer has helped a whole lot.

In retrospect, then, Jennifer finds in the process of publishing this article the origin of her career trajectory:

> And now it's making me think, having to look back at the piece, I still realize I'm still passionate about education. And so it's making me think if there's some way now that maybe I wanna re-direct where I'm writing for education or doing something where I'm working with educational policy and writing. So it's kind of helping me think now, 'Do I wanna stay in the magazine or do I wanna go back towards nonprofit education writing?' So it's amazing that piece I wrote two years ago was still having that impact.

In the aggregate, the graduate student writers we interviewed asserted that success depends on their ability to acquire and use the relevant knowledge domains and habits of mind. In line with research on expertise in learning, for those in writing fields, expertise means the ability to draw on the appropriate writing-related knowledge domains as they are needed and to match those with appropriate habits of mind. These are the essential components students need to learn in a master's in professional writing program so that they can adapt successfully to unforeseen settings and purposes.

What's in It for Faculty?

For faculty teaching in a nontraditional master's program, the enterprise is not about training future college and university teachers; their goal is not to replicate themselves—except to the extent that they model and share expertise in the knowledge domains and habits of mind of successful students. Because of the theoretical and pragmatic aims of such a graduate program, faculty are able to think integratively across boundaries of three fields of professional writing and to recognize differing conceptions of writing and reading in these fields. Faculty in such a program develop their expertise beyond the confines of their past academic training; interrogate and respect the differences and points of contact among the three fields of professional writing in the program; read widely in adjacent or tangential fields of study such as public relations, communication, journalism, and business; participate in the International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Society of America, the Society for Technical Communicators, and the IEEE Professional Communication Society, as well as in NCTE and MLA; and are entrepreneurial in designing a curriculum that is responsive to evolving career fields. Also, faculty can enjoy seeing how relevant their training in literature, criticism, and rhetoric and composition is in other areas of practice such as speech writing, grant writing, report writing, and media and community relations. Indeed as they read more broadly, they will see harmonies between the theory and methods of communication and organizational research and those in their own fields. As they take advantage of these opportunities for learning new things and applying old knowledge in new situations, faculty in such a master of arts in professional writing program have the satisfaction of meeting the expectations of the range of students who seek this degree. In addition, faculty may find satisfaction in seeing their MA students get jobs in a wide range of organizations doing varied but valuable tasks, and in knowing that they have acted to open up a career path, other than teaching, to students who do not intend to pursue a PhD. Indeed, faculty who can embrace the challenge of helping students turn their academic energies to professional development will dismantle the damaging stereotype of the academic who does not learn and change in response to new social needs and contexts. Professional writing faculty must always respond to developments in communication channels, the rhetoric of these new channels and the "documents" they foster, new software programs for creating and disseminating messages, and career tracks for those who aspire to do such work.

The issues in which these findings and experiences are embedded may seem to be an eclectic collection of concerns for faculty and students—understanding the potential for congruence between graduate education and career success; accepting the need for a theoretical grounding in rhetoric; recognizing and respecting relationships between creative and business genres; and teaching the qualities that allow individuals to absorb situational contexts and adapt to them. Nevertheless, our collective experience designing and redesigning the program, along with our qualitative research findings about the knowledge domains and habits of mind that foster success in professional writing, may help other writing program administrators design or refine master's programs that deliver on the promise of ongoing career development and that graduates perceive as truly adding value to their personal and professional lives.

Notes

1. As part of the Institutional Review Board approval for the qualitative research study, the fifteen participants agreed to allow their names to be used in reports of the findings.

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