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Dear Colleagues and Friends~~

As you’ll see in this month’s issue, our articles, symposium contributions, and review essay carry forward traditions of the past as they both attend to the present and begin to show us how we might take up new questions and practices in the future. In this introduction, I’ll briefly synopsize each of these contributions, then think aloud about our forthcoming special issues on The Profession (2013) and on Locations of Writing (2014) and make a small (and happy) announcement about the journal’s circulation.

Our first article, “Local Assessment: Using Genre Analysis to Validate Directed Self-Placement,” collaboratively authored by Anne Ruggles Gere, Laura Aull, Moisés Damián Perales Escudero, Zak Lancaster, and Elizabeth Vander Lei, inquires into the efficacy of a revised Directed Self-Placement (DSP) procedure at the University of Michigan as it also seeks to plot differences between students entering PREP, the pre-first-year preparatory writing course, and FYW, first-year writing. More specifically, this research combines genre-based rhetorical move analysis with corpus-based text analysis to map similarities and differences across students’ essays, in the process finding “clear patterns in students’ attempts to realize the evidence-based argument called for in the

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DSP prompt.” These patterns demonstrate that students whose work permitted them to enter first-year writing used language in more preferred ways,

such as making frequent references to the source text under discussion (i.e., not assuming a shared interpretative context with the reader), using disclaim moves to engage with others’ views and voices (i.e., constructing a reader who is not already aligned with the author’s view), reformulating and exemplifying assertions (as shown in the use of code glosses), expressing assertions through “objective” wordings (avoiding self-mentions), and adopting a measured stance in academic-congruent forms (e.g., use of perhaps instead of in my view).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the students enrolling in the pre-FYW course, PREP, relied more on language associated with an oral or non-academic register and were less critical of the source text they drew on for material for the essay.

Our next article, Jessica Enoch and Jean Bessette’s “Meaningful Engagements: Feminist Historiography and the Digital Humanities,” also inquires, in this case into how digital technologies might enhance the work of feminist historiography. Employing the three criteria that Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch outlined in this journal in their June 2010 “Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence”—strategic contemplation, social circulation, and critical imagination—Enoch and Bessette point us toward the future as they consider the sources of connections and disconnections between feminist and digital historiography: “interanimations between digital archivization and the strategic contemplation of methodology; between ‘distant reading’ tools and the social circulation of women’s memory; and between digital historiographic production and the use of critical imagination.”

Our last article, “Flowing and Freestyling: Learning from Adult Students about Process Knowledge Transfer,” traces the multiple sources of writing process knowledge brought to school by nontraditional students. In “Flowing and Freestyling,” Michelle Navarre Cleary traces the kind of prior knowledge that can shape, distort, and support students’ writing in school, especially the prior knowledge students develop in contexts outside of school. We see this especially through a focus on two such students, Tiffany and Doppel, whose experiences with out-of-school writing and thus with school writing differ:

Both Tiffany and Doppel bring to school the process approaches that they practice outside of school. Tiffany imagines writing as primarily an off-or-on, freeze-or-flow, binary based upon her experience journaling. Doppel employs a collection of analogies for different elements of his process from which he can draw to construct, and when necessary tweak, his writing process. Both are prompted by peers to transfer process knowledge. Tiffany, however, struggles to internalize this
input. She sees academic writing as discrete from who she is, what she does, and what she already knows. In contrast, Doppel’s sense of himself as an academic writer increases the likelihood that he will look for connections between his prior and new learning.

Our next set of articles constitutes a Symposium on MOOCs: massively open online courses. The history of MOOCs is in fact longer than we think it is (see, for example, Jim Porter’s history in the recent issue of the 2012 CCCC-IP Annual), but it’s also the case that they have proliferated during the last year, sponsored variously—by institutions, by start-ups—and their aims range from the philanthropic (providing education to those who have no access to education) to the commercial (using MOOCs as a test bed for a model of education that is also in search of a business model). Even before MOOCs for composition were announced (which they now have been; several are in the process of “delivery”), it seemed wise to learn something about them. Toward that end, I invited two colleagues who had enrolled in and completed a MOOC—one of the distinguishing features of MOOCs thus far is their high drop-out rate—to share with us what it was like to be a student in such a course and, on the basis of this experience, to help us consider what MOOCs might mean for composition. Fortunately for us, Jeff Rice and Steve Krause accepted my invitation. And should you want to read more of their observations on the topic—especially since Steve has since enrolled, with graduate students taking a conventional course, in a second MOOC—please do visit their blogs: Jeff’s is at http://ydog.net/ and Steve’s is at http://stevendkrause.com.

Our next entry is a review essay, Stephen A. Bernhardt’s “Rhetorical Technologies, Technological Rhetorics.” Bernhardt reads each text, including a digital volume, and reads across them, noting questions, observations, and patterns for us: Shane Borrowman’s edited On the Blunt Edge: Technology in Composition’s History and Pedagogy; Amy C. Kimme Hea’s edited Going Wireless: A Critical Exploration of Wireless and Mobile Technologies for Composition Teachers and Scholars; Ben McCorkle’s Rhetorical Delivery as Technological Discourse: A Cross-Historical Study; Jeff Rice’s Digital Detroit: Rhetoric and Space in the Age of the Network; and Susan H. Delagrange’s digital Technologies of Wonder: Rhetorical Practice in a Digital World. Based on this reading, Bernhardt concludes that with the assistance of this scholarship, we can connect earlier rhetorics with the mediated spaces where we increasingly live:

Together, these five volumes offer provocative challenges to rhetorical theory as it confronts an endless and accelerating stream of new media and newly digitized
experiences. We are lucky to be so well situated, able to draw on a long and adaptable tradition. We are also lucky to have scholars who so productively discover ways to connect our traditions of rhetorical analysis to our mediated lives.

And last but not least, we have a poster page, this one speaking to digital rhetoric, as well as a list of reviewers for the previous year and an index to that year, too.

And some news from CCC:

Our September issue, our fourth special issue, this one addressing The Profession, is moving into production. Final manuscripts have been submitted; our plans are to include in this issue six articles and nine vignettes—the latter, a first for CCC—as well as a review essay and a poster page. I’ll be very eager to see what you and other readers of CCC think of the special issue and the contribution made by the vignettes.

In addition, we have been working on the last special issue, the 2014 special issue, this one addressing Locations of Writing. As of January 9, we had received over 200 submissions for this issue, 52 of which are “small-scope” narratives complete at the time of submission, the remainder proposals for articles. We assembled a group of fine reviewers—a mix of CCC Editorial Board members and reviewers in the field—to review and make recommendations for all of the submissions, with each receiving two reviews. As I write this at the end of February, we are in the process now of accepting vignettes and encouraging the development of full manuscripts from a subset of the proposals, and we are confident that we will have notified everyone who submitted, by the week of the CCCC Annual Convention. In addition, we are providing reviewer comments to all, largely through the efforts of our terrific editorial assistant Jennifer O’Malley. As important, and in consultation with the CCC Editorial Board, we have decided, based on the strength of the vignettes and submissions, that our special issue for 2014 will be a double issue: in September and December that, as it happens, will conclude my editorship as well.

And last but definitely not least, a quick but important announcement: for the first time in five years, we have increased the circulation of the journal. And for that, dear readers, we thank you—very much.

Kathleen Blake Yancey
Florida State University