Editor's Note: This issue's symposium consists of what I call "critical retrospec-
tions" on a CCCC position statement from 1987, “Scholarship in Composition: 
Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs” (http://www.ncte.org/
cccc/resources/positions/scholarshipincomp). As with the preceding issue 
(February 2015), I invited several scholars and teachers from across the field to 
reflect on this statement, asking them if it still represents the range of interests 
and commitments within our discipline. This set of responses challenges us to 
think about both our disciplinarity and its relation to adjacent areas, such as 
technical and professional writing, and the complexities of our interdiscipli-
narity, as both a generative and potentially complicating aspect of the multi-
dimensional work of writing studies. I thank the contributors and hope their 
responses serve as the grounds for further conversation about the work we do.
Extending the Responsive Reach of “Scholarship in Composition”

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Around the time I should have been drafting a response for this round robin on the CCCC’s 1987 Position Statement “Scholarship in Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs” (SiC), I was following news stories highlighting pervasive gendered violence. Globally, Boko Haram was detailing how they planned to sell the schoolgirls they had captured as, among other things, sex slaves. Nationally, news was dominated by yet another young male who went on a shooting spree, in part, according to his YouTube posting, to get “retribution” from an entire sorority for the “crime” of these women not sleeping with him (CNN). Such reports prompted me to ask how we can do responsive scholarship, work that calls us to engage deeply with problems we see around us, cultivate reciprocal relationships with the range of participants who have a stake in these issues, and take informed action based on what we have to contribute (see Sheridan). For this work to be institutionally validated, however, we need to create ways to make this work intelligible and valued within the institutions where we work. SiC provides a model for such work.

This position statement both explains our diversity and calls for valuing this diversity. One theme of this framework recognizes the capaciousness, or “multi” aspects, of our field: multidisciplinary roots; multiple ways of conducting and presenting scholarship; multiple ways of counting our scholarly work. In the intervening quarter century, some multi’s have become common practice in our field, such as the use of mixed methods and the acknowledgment of administration as scholarly work; other multi’s remain challenges, such as the continued difficulty tenure and promotion committees have in assessing collaborative and interdisciplinary scholarship.

A second theme highlights our field’s tactical suppleness in how we research, teach, and use language to be responsive to pressing issues. Part of that suppleness is recognizing the importance of being legible to university administration (evidenced in SiC’s subtitle), as well as to academic credentializing bodies and national funders—a struggle that continues today, with significant material consequences (see Phelps and Ackerman). Another part of that suppleness is to adapt our research to societal and academic changes. Today, I argue, those changes call us to engage in conversations about the value of what we do with a greater range of audiences, a move that we have not been
particularly successful in making (see Duffy). Therefore, in this response essay, I want to offer an example of such work and close with what this example may indicate about future iterations of documents like SiC.

In June 2014, five University of Louisville PhD students and I inaugurated the first annual Digital Media Academy (DMA), a free two-week digital media camp for rising sixth-grade girls from two Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. Wanting to partner with the community on shared goals, we connected with two public elementary schools, one of which scored in the bottom 3 percent of Kentucky public schools. One goal was to address the “summer slide,” students’ documented tendency to lose academic skills, especially in reading and writing, during the school-free summer months (see National Summer Learning; Borman). A second goal was, modifying Stuart Selber, to help girls develop the technological, critical, and design literacies needed to create digital messages more to their liking than the messages that often surrounded them.

We viewed the development of girls’ digital literacy as an issue of both economic and social justice. Economically, girls could earn far more in STEM-related fields than in most other careers, but women are woefully underrepresented in fields such as engineering. According to a Stanford study, two contributing factors are that women have lacked role models and have had fewer “technical problem-solving opportunities through K–12 compared to men” (Crawford), something DMA hoped to redress, even if we weren’t engineers ourselves. As far as social justice, we believed that girls needed to see a greater range of images than the pervasive sexualized and commercialized representations of girls. This need was reinforced when, in an attempt to honor the ten-year-old DMA girls’ soccer fever stoked by this summer’s World Cup, I searched online for “soccer girls.” I found soft porn-like images of a well-oiled women’s soccer team lined up in cut-up jerseys, G-strings, soccer socks, and cleats, or memes like “Boys do soccer. Girls do soccer boys.” DMA sought to help girls create their own alternatives.

To address these goals, girls learned programs and platforms (e.g., Gimp, iMovie, WordPress, Instagram) to compose videos, audio interviews, images, and daily blog posts; they examined media representations affecting them personally (e.g., Why are there so few pictures of female veterinarians? Why so few mixed-race friend groups on television?), and they collaborated on digital
projects proposing solutions to an issue or problem they identified (e.g., how to deal with bullying in middle school, how to combat limiting definitions of girls, how to be their own superheroes). Girls presented their work within their digital networks and at the public DMA showcase, as well as in media interviews with the city paper, the public radio station, and the university publications.

This year’s DMA was well received. Multiple Louisville communities valued this project, as evident in girls’ work and enthusiasm, parents’ responses, partnership teachers’ feedback, and many radio and print media stories on the camp. The university also valued this highly visible community engagement: the Liberal Studies Program, which sponsored the camp, appreciated an easily understood example of liberal studies’ work; in addition, the English department appreciated another opportunity for graduate students to study, teach, and research within a tight cohort invested in exploring the role of digital media in their professional lives. DMA had also succeeded as a responsive project, tapping a variety of concerns, working with a range of partners inside and outside the academy, disseminating lessons to diverse audiences in ways they found valuable (e.g., academic reports, print and multimedia news stories, and public presentations).

With DMA scarcely a week over, I'd like to reflect upon DMA in light of SiC, a document that defines what it means to do scholarship in our field. As noted earlier, SiC emphasizes our field’s multiplicity and tactical suppleness, even as it encourages academic legibility and responsivity in the midst of social and academic changes. DMA illustrates the value of SiC themes and, I argue, the last twenty-five years’ call for us to push these two themes even more.

A first theme, the “multi’s,” calls us to value the possibilities for interdisciplinary, collaborative partnerships that address a variety of audiences in diverse ways, and DMA highlights the benefits of expanding our typical engagements with these multi’s. At DMA, we developed traditional interdisciplinary collaborations, such as working with liberal studies and public school teachers, and developed less typical interdisciplinary collaborations, such as with the School of Business’ Entrepreneurial Program and with those interested in encouraging women in STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. We also found ways to engage others beyond the traditionally academic moves of writing internal reports or scholarly articles; indeed, we have been asked to offer K–12 workshops in a state hundreds of miles away, were written up in a national K–12 math and science education newsletter, and have had our ideas published in the city newspaper and broadcast on public radio. Extending our collaborations and audiences offers us a greater reach as we contribute to
issues we care about, whether highlighting the importance of composing in networked, digital spaces or finding ways for girls to design representations of themselves as problem solvers and meaning makers.

DMA also demonstrated the value of pushing a second theme in SiC, our field’s suppleness when responding to current contexts, in this case, the centrality of community-engaged work. Today, changing economic support for higher education calls universities to justify their funding, making responsive and community-engaged scholarship once again well received, even beyond land-grant institutions and outreach programs that have long had a tradition of such work. Although universities are recognizing this engaged scholarship—just look at the number of schools with tenure categories for responsive scholarship that generally fall under Ernest Boyer’s “Scholarship of Engagement” (Perry)—the work required to develop true partnership is often invisible in institutional structures, making this work all the more difficult to sustain. Consequently, while DMA reaffirms SiC’s call to respond to academic and societal needs, DMA also highlights the need to push institutional structures to make that work legible and valuable.

Over the last twenty-five years, documents such as SiC have helped explain the diversity of our field, which makes possible the valuing of scholarship arising out of projects like DMA. Such valuing calls us to push the boundaries of how and with whom we engage. While it remains unclear how fully deans, department chairs, and faculty may consult this position paper, I hope future position papers continue to justify our responsive, diverse academic scholarship and that as a field we can create the conditions where such documents are given greater weight. In doing so, we can be legible as we nimbly respond to the questions we find pressing, in the diverse ways we know how to research and to share that research with others.

Works Cited


A Statement on Using Position Statements

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The 1987 CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement was created at a moment when compositionists openly debated whether the field could cohere as a discipline given its theoretical, epistemological, and methodological influences from so many different disciplines (Odell 147; Larson 394; North 369). Despite these internal debates about disciplinary identity, however, the statement responded more directly to external threats from literary scholars and other humanists who questioned the field’s legitimacy as an academic discipline (Hairston 133). John Trimbur and Barbara Cambridge help us understand these external threats with their report from the 1986 Wyoming Conference. “[W]riting teachers across the board,” they write, complained that they were given “second class status because [they] are interested in the study and teaching of writing,” and writing teachers expressed a “common sense of outrage” at “the tenure fights that should never have happened” because their range of work was not valued by their home departments and institutions (13). The 1987 CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement aimed to support scholars who, positioned as they were on the margins of English studies and the humanities, faced “immediate and daily” problems in their own departments (Hairston 133).

This “Scholarship in Composition” statement presented three particularly important supporting reasons to bolster compositionists’ arguments for
redefining their scholarly activity within the contemporary context of their local institutions in the mid-1980s. First, the document refuted the notion that composition studies is just lore and personal reflections passed down through generations of writing teachers; instead, the statement explained, composition studies research, like research in all academic disciplines, has been systematically judged by peers to make original, substantive contributions to the field’s knowledge about its common subjects of study. Second, by speaking to the field’s interdisciplinary nature, listing its connections to fields such as “literacy studies, classical and modern rhetoric, cognitive psychology, . . . [and] work in computer assisted instruction and artificial intelligence,” the statement emphasized the fact that compositionists’ core set of research questions and topics extended beyond the first-year composition course to include investigations of a broad range of writing practices and the production and circulation of a wide variety of texts. Third and finally, the statement challenged the dominant and debilitating perception held by many humanities colleagues in the mid-1980s that teaching and writing program administration represented the entirety of composition studies. The CCCC position statement articulated the research foundation of teaching and WPA work but also brought coherence to what might otherwise have appeared to be the scattered activities of compositionists who not only published writing research but may also have written textbooks, delivered workshops for faculty on composition pedagogy, and managed writing programs.

In many ways, the CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement speaks to our present-day concerns as well, as many of the challenges addressed in that 1987 document still exist today. This contemporary exigence has been highlighted in CCC pieces published by Irwin Weiser and Michael Day et al. in the past three years. In particular, compositionists—both those on the tenure track and those in a wide range of non-tenure-track positions—still face the challenge of earning recognition for the research-based foundation of their teaching, WPA, and community engagement activities, and they still need to invest significant effort in persuading departmental-, college-, and university-level tenure and promotion committees to see the intellectual coherence of their scholarly activity.
level tenure and promotion committees to see the intellectual coherence of their scholarly activity. To support composition professionals in addressing these concerns, Weiser and Day et al. call on scholars, especially those with tenure, to work within their local institutions to ensure that as “conceptions of scholarship expand” (Weiser 669), conceptions of tenurable and promotable activity expand as well to include “teaching and engagement activities” (669), “digital and new media scholarship, editing and curating, administration and leadership, and professional mentoring” (Day et al. 188).

A revised CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement could focus these efforts to define, in contemporary terms, “what it means to engage in scholarly work” (Day et al. 187). To start, this revision would explain the field’s ever-widening reach beyond composition into fields such as rhetoric and writing studies, and it would capture rhetoric, composition, and writing studies’ identity as an “emerging field” in the National Research Council’s taxonomy of research disciplines (Phelps and Ackerman). This revision would also, following Weiser and Day et al., offer a capacious definition of scholarly work, an expansion that they begin to envision in the lists I quoted at the end of the previous paragraph. This updated definition would be one that, like the 1987 position statement, helps faculty, deans, and department chairs see coherence in composition scholars’ seemingly distinct research, teaching, and service activities. Even more important, though, a revised CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement could do what the original 1987 statement did not, namely, move beyond articulating what activities fit into an expanded definition of “composition scholarship” to also explain how these types of activities can and should be evaluated as scholarship.

Any revision of the CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” position statement needs to be grounded not only in an assessment of how well it represents our field’s present range of interests and commitments but also, and equally as important, in an understanding of how this document has been or could be used. CCCC position statements do important work in staking compositionists’ claims to and positions in pressing professional and public conversations. As I argue in Shaping Language Policy in the U.S., however, the transformative power of CCCC position statements comes in how they are put to use in local contexts. They offer heuristics meant to spark invention of local arguments and local practices. CCCC position statements provide rich rhetorical resources for scholars to draw on as they work to revise the local documents that shape how their institutions value and support activities related to literacy teaching.
and learning, including those documents that inform tenure and promotion decisions as well as evaluation of the scholarly activity of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty.

Significantly, CCCC position statements have been leveraged to support arguments for definitions of scholarship that reflect our professional practice in composition studies. For example, the 1998 CCCC position statement “CCCC Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for Work with Technology” challenges the assumption held by many humanities colleagues that there is only one way of creating and disseminating scholarly knowledge and proving its value to one’s field, namely, through print publication of books and journal articles. Cheryl E. Ball has explained in her online academic portfolio how she used this position statement to lay the groundwork for her tenure and promotion committee to fairly assess the scholarly value of her digital scholarship and to teach them how to read her e-portfolio tenure file in a way that respected its “born digital” design (Ball). As this example shows, the often-overlooked value of CCCC position statements comes in how they are put to use in local contexts.

Significantly, Weiser and Day et al. point to the need for just such local work. They call on composition scholars to work toward seeing that their local appointment, annual evaluation, and tenure and promotion guidelines reflect this more capacious definition of scholarly work. A revised CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” statement—one that clearly articulates this contemporary definition of scholarly work and speaks to the breadth of positions, tenure-track and non-tenure-track alike, in which compositionists work—could lend significant rhetorical power to scholars working to enact these local changes. Moreover, this definition could be one that, like Ball, junior scholars use to explain to their humanities colleagues not only what activities should be considered as scholarship but also how activities such as teaching, administration, and community engagement can and should be evaluated as such.

Works Cited


The Living Scholarship of Composition Studies: A Case for Students-as-Scholarship

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At the heart of the 1987 statement on the range of scholarship in composition is the interdisciplinarity of the scholarship that makes up our field. In their recent CCC article, Day, Delagrange, Palmquist, Pemberton, and Walker make a strong case for redefining some of the scholarly work many of us do, which includes activities like digital and new media publishing, editorial work, administration and leadership work, and mentoring. But I think our teaching is also part of our scholarship, even though I realize that usually we are judged separately on our teaching in hiring, tenure, and promotion venues. While teaching has always been seen as separate, I argue that our scholarship and teaching “inter-are,” to use a Buddhist term (Nhat Hanh 145–46). They share in each other’s essences, and because they do, perhaps future versions of the statement could reflect this.

It is thrilling for me as a teacher of writing to design a new course, even when it’s the same first-year writing course with the same course number.
Each year there is a new theme or new practice to try. One year, the course is an exploration of masculinity in U.S. popular culture. The next year, students “compose” memes and vines and then reflect on the ways those compositions engage particular rhetorical issues. And the next year, the course is a self-conscious study of rhetoric, examining our daily speaking and writing practices at home, at work, and in other classes as rhetoric in communities. Most college courses and subjects don’t have this flexibility, this interdisciplinarity. The writing classroom does because that is the nature of rhetoric, of writing, of language, of being wholly human. So in one sense what the writing class produces is more whole people.

Teaching is an integral part of the way the field understands itself, and the teaching of writing itself is interdisciplinary scholarship. Certainly our teaching informs our scholarship. When we teach writing, we are always producing from that teaching, and that is scholarship, just not the same published kind that counts so much in the academy. The scholarship of bodies, of students—the living scholarship that is our students—seems so much more important to me than an article or book that eventually will collect dust on a library shelf. The living scholarship of our students goes out into the world and produces lives, and things, and joy, and pain, and connection. It’s just not an item on our CVs, not like a publication is. And it cannot be.

I am reminded of Plato’s Phaedrus, a dialogue about rhetoric, the soul, and love, but given to us as a scene of a teacher and a student talking. In the best interpretation, it’s a dialogue about learning together by studying language and words that lead to other interdisciplinary studies of the soul, of justice, of truth, of language. It’s a story about a student who is becoming in front of a teacher (in all the ways that word can mean). As scholars and teachers, we haven’t strayed very far from Plato, and that’s good, I think.

How might the CCCC statement represent the importance of the production of this kind of human(e) scholarship? Instead of books and articles, many (most) of us teach, not publish. We make citizen-scholars themselves. The position statement should demonstrate how important this kind of scholarship is to a more just and equitable world. The most important influence most of us will have is in the people we teach. How might the statement communicate to others that the writing classroom is almost always a backdrop, the scene of all scholarship in the field, but it is also the foreground, the real work we do?
How might we see and understand the ways in which the writing classroom, perhaps more than most college classrooms, is about the production of living scholarship, of the cultivation and “publication” of bodies that are collaborative works of citizen-art?

In Emerson’s famous 1837 speech, “The American Scholar,” addressed to the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Cambridge, Massachusetts (addressed to students), he focuses much of his time on action, on labor, on what the American scholar is to do and who he should be (he was thinking purely in these gendered terms; his audience was all male). In fact, he opens the speech with a binary: hope versus labor. Emerson says, “Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor” (63). Similarly in his discussion of reading, he offers two famous sentiments: “Books are for the scholar’s idle times” (68), and “Only so much I know, as I have lived” (70). The focus on being a scholar is action, labor. We are what we do, and it’s more than reading books, but that is only part of it. We are our labor in the world. Emerson’s conclusion is a reseeing of his beginning: while humanity is a fragmented and divided “man,” with only “walking monsters,” a “good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man” walking whole (64). The American scholar, these students in front of him, should be whole human beings, which entails reading, thinking, and writing, and laboring in the many avenues of life. Emerson concludes: “The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all” (79).

For most who attend CCCC conventions, for most who teach writing, the majority of our labor is the teaching of writing. Our students are the products of our labors as teachers, usually more so than official publications. If we accept that our students are our living scholarship, and we really are asking them to read, think, write, and labor in the world—that we are expecting them to do that laboring, whatever that may mean to them—then it seems to me that the CCCC statement should help us articulate the writing classroom as a unique place that produces living academic scholarship, interdisciplinary in nature, widely encompassing in nature, treating the whole person in the sense that Emerson spoke of the American scholar, and Plato spoke of rhetoric. We might then conclude that one measure of our scholarship can be taken from Emerson: only so much I have published, as my students have labored to learn.
WAC or WAG: Should Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Be Expanded to Writing Across the Globe (WAG)?

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When I was invited to submit a critical retrospection on the CCCC position statement published in 1987, I was both honored and daunted. I was daunted because during my career I have taught many more technical and professional communication courses than composition courses. However, I believe that the issues and concerns facing our fields are not dramatically dissimilar and that many of the competencies and much of the knowledge that students bring to my upper-division courses in technical communication are shaped in their first-year composition courses.

After nearly four decades, the CCCC position statement on “Scholarship in Composition” does still accurately reflect much of the scholarship in the field. When describing the range of scholarly activity in the field, the position statement points out that “[c]omposition research is characteristically interdisciplinary.” The field continues to recognize the value that interdisciplinary approaches have to scholars and teachers and also to our students. In “The Disciplined Interdisciplinarity of Writing Studies,” Charles Bazerman states that “interdisciplinary engagement . . . can help make visible the home discipline’s core assumptions as well as the core assumptions of the other disciplines one engages with” (19). A similar point can be made about intercultural study; when we learn about other cultures, we become able to see our own culture from a different perspective and to recognize that our culture’s way of engaging with the world is one viewpoint among many, not the only one (Bennett 62; Soria and Troisi 265–66).
Over the years, much attention has been focused on the need to prepare students for their future careers both as professionals and as citizens. Should universities focus on making students employable to the exclusion of all else? And what does it mean to make students “career-ready”? These are weighty and complex questions, ones that I will not pretend to respond to in this short piece. Rather, I would like to add another question, one to which I do offer a response: What role should intercultural education play in writing instruction?

Writing about communities of practice, Linda Adler-Kassner states, “Competencies are always situated within contexts” (449; emphasis in original). She goes on to suggest that general education can be “remodeled” to become a place where students learn how to develop competencies within specific contexts. Adler-Kassner describes an interdisciplinary course she has taught and argues that the course can “foster learning for career readiness” and help students develop competency in writing (449). A similar approach can be taken with interdisciplinary courses that have a global focus. Such courses can help students develop global competencies that are particularly important to prepare them for the workplace, to help them develop as well-rounded citizens, and to develop their writing competency and critical thinking ability.

Our students will face many challenges both in the workplace and in their personal lives as concerned global citizens. In order to prepare students to function in today’s global society we must facilitate the development of the skills and knowledge associated with global competency. Globally competent individuals take a worldview of events and see connections between the global and the local. They are skilled communicators who possess both intercultural awareness and sensitivity. They know how to work with diverse others and manage knowledge to create shared understandings (Starke-Meyerring, Duin, and Palvetzian 142). Globally competent individuals have the ability to think critically about global events and view them from an interdisciplinary perspective (Flammia 333). They use their knowledge and skills to take action to address global challenges at a local level.

Global competency also encompasses information fluency and the ability to use technology for research and for collaboration across cultures. Information-fluent individuals have the ability to collect the information needed to address a problem or issue; they also possess the critical thinking skills necessary to analyze and evaluate both the information and its sources. Finally, they are able to arrive at logical conclusions based on their research and present their findings in an appropriate and effective manner. A report by
the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) consortium states, “Information Fluency may be envisioned as the optimal outcome when critical thinking skills are combined with information literacy and relevant computing skills” (ACS). This definition focuses on three overlapping skills: information literacy, technology literacy, and critical thinking.

There are clearly some areas of overlap between the skills and knowledge needed for information fluency and those needed for global competency. In fact, assignments that challenge students to develop their global competency can also be designed to help them develop their information fluency. Writing about a global health course, Christy R. Stevens and Patricia J. Campbell argue that when students develop a sense of their roles as global citizens, they will also come to understand the connections between lifelong learning, information fluency, and global citizenship (536).

Composition studies needs to focus on writing for international audiences and crossing not just disciplinary boundaries but also national boundaries as well. In recent years, many composition scholars have advocated for the need to address writing outside of the classroom in the larger civic sphere (Hawisher et al.; Williams; Yancey). Steven Fraiberg has argued that “tracing multimodal-multilingual literacy practices” is the key to “moving composition into the twenty-first century” (100). He calls for “a remixing of the field” and crossing not only disciplinary but “geographic and linguistic” boundaries and states that global partnerships are critical to this new framework for composition (100). Such partnerships are already flourishing in professional, business, and technical communication (Craig, Poe, and Rojas; Sapp; Starke-Meyerring, Duin, and Palvetzian).

The proliferation of information and communication technologies and social media platforms has greatly increased the ability of teachers to have students interact with diverse others and to gain global perspectives on their research and writing—and on their lives. Today many institutions are providing interdisciplinary courses that focus on global issues, but often these courses are upper-division classes and honors seminars taken by a small percentage of students. Composition studies is the logical place to begin preparing students to span both national borders and disciplinary boundaries, to make them realize that they will be living and working in a global society even if they never leave their hometown (which is highly unlikely), and to prepare them for the fact that the audiences for which they write are likely to be international, and the
documents they write are likely to be translated. In short, to prepare students not just for a global workplace, but for global citizenship.

Those students who have been given opportunities to become engaged with global issues during their college careers are much more likely to become actively involved global citizens in their lives after graduation. More than six years ago, the National Council of Teachers of English addressed the challenges for English education brought about by globalization and discussed the need to make changes “to literacy curricula that traditionally view knowledge making and communication as straightforward, text-based, and individualized, a perspective that was only appropriate before the recent explosion in communicative technologies and resulting economic, social, and cultural realities.” The Council goes on to state that in order to prepare students for global citizenship “we must first help them to be critical, meta-aware thinkers and communicators” so that they have the ability to play an active role in addressing global issues (NCTE).

Although some inroads have been made toward addressing this challenge, there is much work yet to be done. As Fraiberg and others (Canagarajah 613; Hawisher et al. 634–35; Pennycook 157–58) have argued, composition instruction needs to follow the lead of other disciplines in developing courses that are both interdisciplinary and international in focus. International collaborations among faculty have been developed in business, in engineering, in the arts, and in the sciences (Bandyopadhyay, Coleman, and DeWolfe; Stevens and Campbell; Hanson). Such collaborations have served to help students develop those competencies associated with global citizenship. Just as students’ lifelong writing competencies are best developed when writing instruction is infused throughout the curriculum and not relegated to one or two first-year courses, so too must a focus on writing for international audiences and addressing global issues be integrated into the curriculum—starting with composition instruction. If composition instruction does anything less than provide this preparation, then our students will not be ready; they will not be career-ready, but more importantly, they will not be ready to function as world citizens capable of addressing global issues in the twenty-first century.

Works Cited


The Impact of the Interdisciplinarity of Composition Studies on Technical Communication

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As a graduate student, I was mentored by the director of composition at my university. Even though I was a technical communication student, I learned a great deal about the history, theory, and trajectory of the field of composition and how composition impacted technical communication. I was excited by the interdisciplinary connections between composition and technical communication. During my program, I attended and presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), collaborated with colleagues in composition and rhetoric, and integrated scholarship from composition with research in technical communication. I quickly understood that the connections that can be made among composition and related fields (for instance, literature, business and professional writing, writing studies, and user-centered design) provide for rich sites of study and topics of exploration.

A retrospective review of the 1987 CCCC Position Statement “Scholarship in Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs,” reveals a field embracing the “range of scholarly activity in composition,” with the first point of the statement celebrating the diverse reach of the field of composition and calling for recognition of a variety of methodological approaches and an appreciation of the cross-pollination of research and pedagogy from related fields of study. As an interdisciplinary field, composition studies has impacted the development and course of a variety of disciplines, including technical communication. In this short retrospective piece, I address the ways that composition, as noted in the first point of the 1987 position statement, is inherently interdisciplinary and diverse. More specifically, I address this interdisciplinarity through a brief review of how composition has impacted the field of technical communication, providing a few examples from research and pedagogy.

Research
The 1987 position statement noted, “Composition research is characteristically interdisciplinary. It draws on work from a variety of fields—literacy studies,
classical and modern rhetoric, cognitive psychology, the history of instructional practices, studies in pedagogy, work in computer assisted instruction and artificial intelligence, and studies in linguistics and communication. And it has taken as its subject the production, exchange, and reception of texts in a variety of settings. Research and scholarship in technical communication, also an inherently interdisciplinary field, shares a number of connections with composition. Davida Charney observed that scholars in composition and scholars in technical communication often contribute to both fields. She asserts that “many prominent scholars in technical and scientific communication (for example, Jeanne Fahnestock, Michael Halloran, Carolyn Miller, Lee Odell, Jack Selzer, and Dorothy Winsor) have published in composition journals and have played major roles in rhetoric and composition associations” (11). Further, she articulated that composition and technical communication research aligns in a number of ways, noting that “it seems clear that the fields of composition and technical communication overlap to some extent, and that the course of technical communication is not wholly independent of developments in rhetoric and composition” (11). One specific area of overlap is research about writing, whether technical writing or composition. Research considering the composing and writing processes of composition and technical writing features prominently in the work of scholars seeking to understand the importance of audience, cognition, and rhetorical approaches to teaching writing. For example, Robert R. Johnson, in “Audience Involved: Toward a Participatory Model of Writing,” examines how considering an audience-involved model in composition and technical communication pedagogy can foster participatory ways of learning. Further, Elizabeth Overman Smith noted that, between the years of 1988 and 1992, “early discussions of rhetoric capture the texts about the canons of rhetoric, the reader and audience, and the composing process (for example, Thomas Huckin; Teun van Dijk and Walter Kintsch; Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, “Audience Addressed”; the work of Linda Flower and John Hayes and their co-authors). These references are common to both technical communication and composition studies” (Smith 440). Though more contemporary connections between the types of research and studies conducted by technical communication scholars and scholars in composition are not as readily apparent, research that illustrates the interdisciplinary nature and cross-pollination of both fields is still important and valuable. Research that demonstrates this cross-pollination includes connections between discussions of research and ethics in technical communication (Breuch, Olson, and Frantz) and feminist approaches in technical communication (Flynn). Finally, the work
of scholars in technical communication has also appeared in *College Composition and Communication* (for example, Simmons and Grabill; Johnson, “Craft”), highlighting the 1987 position statement, which states that “an individual’s work may necessarily be diverse and may necessarily be published in academic journals cutting across traditional academic boundaries.”

**Pedagogy**

Composition has also had a significant impact on how technical communication pedagogy has developed and evolved. Though technical communication grew out of instruction in writing for the engineering disciplines, introductory courses in technical communication are often sequenced after first- and second-year composition courses in academic writing programs. In addition, pedagogical approaches in the technical communication courses were historically grounded in theoretical and pedagogical approaches in composition. Kelli Cargile Cook asserted that “early theoretical frames for technical communication pedagogy developed from the theories first articulated by scholars in composition and rhetoric, such as Richard Fulkerson and James Berlin” (7). Cook rightly acknowledged that as technical communication has developed as a field, new and unique pedagogical approaches have been integrated and implemented. However, noting that at a foundational level technical communication pedagogy has borrowed from composition is significant. Just one example of the effect of pedagogical approaches in composition on pedagogy in technical communication is illustrated in the turn to the social aspects of writing pedagogy. In 1993, Charlotte Thralls and Nancy Roundy Blyler described a social perspective of technical communication research and pedagogy. The authors noted that a liberatory approach to technical communication pedagogy is largely supported and advanced by a number of scholars in composition studies, including Berlin (253). Berlin, in “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” argues for an emancipatory approach to writing and rhetoric that promotes students’ and teachers’ acknowledgment and resistance to oppressive and hegemonic political and social structures. Thralls and Blyler also note that other composition scholars such as Ede, Lundsford, and Flynn are “advocates of liberatory pedagogy” and encourage social interaction and collaboration as a means for developing “nonhierarchical or asymmetrical relations of power” (Thralls and Blyler 256). Likewise, technical communication scholars, like their composition counterparts, have examined a more liberatory and critical pedagogical approach (for example, Scott; Haas).
Conclusion

The 1987 CCCC Position Statement indicates “composition research has been characterized since the beginning by its diversity, drawing on several fields of study and many methods of investigation.” Further, interdisciplinary connections between research in technical communication and composition are undeniable. Moreover, scholars in the field of technical communication have also acknowledged the importance and benefit of celebrating interdisciplinary connections with composition, noting that “separating ourselves too much from other fields, including rhetoric and composition, from which many of us developed the theoretical and pedagogical foundations for our work,” would not be advantageous (Blakeslee and Spilka 85). With this in mind, and as a technical communicator, I have presented a few small examples that represent how the interdisciplinary nature of the field of composition, as celebrated in the first point of the position statement, has historically and more contemporarily cross-pollinated with technical communication research and pedagogy, creating an impact on both fields of study. Going forward, I hope that scholars in composition and technical communication will encourage increased and continued collaboration across the disciplines and continue to celebrate the value and importance of interdisciplinarity.

Works Cited


How the CCCC “Scholarship in Composition” Statement Supports Technical Communication Scholarship: An Irish Perspective

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“How Scholarship in Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs” captures the diversity of academic experiences and pursuits within composition studies, the observational, collaborative, and humanistic nature of research, and the multimodal outputs. In this piece, I do not try to do justice to the scope of the position statement. Instead, I wish to exemplify some ways in which it supports the discipline of technical communication, based on my academic experience as a technical communication instructor in Ireland.

In Ireland, technical communication is a new academic field; the University of Limerick (UL) is the only university to offer programs in this area. The occupational field itself only developed in Ireland in the late twentieth century because of the location of software and telecommunications companies in the country (Kirkman 150). The programs at UL respond to the increasing industry need for graduates who can write content to describe and support products for software industries. Since the mid-1990s, several hundred Irish graduates have completed undergraduate modules, or full programs at certificate, diploma, and MA levels in technical communication. Many now have ten to fifteen years of industry experience. Nonetheless, the discipline is not widely understood either within or outside of the academy in Ireland, and we have a continuing...
need to promote our work to senior administrators within the university, as well as externally. Louise W. Phelps and John M. Ackermann’s (182) assertion regarding composition studies resonates in the case of technical communication in Ireland: “external validation matters . . . in the realm of university politics, government statistics, federal funding, and foundations.”

One challenge for technical communication instructors is to convince colleagues in other disciplines and senior university administrators that scholarship in the discipline is more than merely “instrumental.” Carolyn Rude argues that technical communication must have a solid research base in order to be regarded as a credible discipline. As she explains (175): “The identity of any academic field is based in part on the research it conducts. Well-established fields are identified even in dictionary definitions as areas of study.” The position statement legitimizes research strategies and outputs that are atypical in traditional fields. Technical communication scholars can examine changing practice through several lenses that it foregrounds: workplace studies, studies of texts, theoretical, pedagogical, and social implications of changing work environments, and observations of users in action. In this respect, the statement is a helpful tool, recognizing as it does the “diverse,” “observational and experimental,” and theoretical work done by composition scholars. It reminds us that another concern of scholarship in composition is “the practice and uses of writing both inside and outside the academy.”

The statement also foregrounds collaboration. In technical communication scholarship, studies of practice and involving practitioners help to reinforce mutual engagement in a structured collaborative enterprise, and help to bridge the academic-practitioner divide. Joel Kline and Thomas Barker (33) believe that in such projects, “the specific professional identity of being an academic or a practitioner is greatly reduced in favour of the negotiated identity of being a community member working toward mutual goals.”

Scholarship in composition can enable us to interrogate the value not only of output but of the process itself. Jim Henry (115) regards writing as a powerful tool because it has the potential to both harbor and shape knowledge. He notes that the prevalent view of language and discourse as “mere packaging for thought” elides the important work that writing does in shaping meaning. As part of the writing process, writers discover what they understand, think, and know. Writing, in effect, creates a space for reflection.
I recently interviewed technical communication practitioners working in Ireland to examine their perceptions of the field. This quote from one interviewee (personal communication, April 2012), who runs a technical writing service company, shows how the writing process clarifies meaning:

Very often when you write things down, it's only at that point that they become clear. At that point, you can identify where the gaps, overlaps, inconsistencies are. . . . Sometimes, when you're writing a process, and the process is complex, you end up changing the process. The best example is with a large public sector client, where we were describing a process which they thought was very simple and the first draft of the document that went out described that process but also identified the things they hadn't thought about. Over time that document evolved into a much bigger document which catered for a lot of circumstances they had never thought through how to handle. The business of writing something down and making it clear, clarified their thinking. We were holding up a mirror to them.

As we see, even in composition disciplines regarded as functional, such as technical communication, the act of writing shapes meaning.

Finally, the acknowledgment of diversity, multimodality, and interdisciplinary studies in the position statement is also central to scholarship in technical communication. Technology is changing at exponential rates; writers increasingly work using structured authoring standards such as XML and DITA (Mott and Ford 335); digitization is changing traditional content development tools and formats (Spilka 2); and through social media anyone with access to a computer and Internet connection can develop and publish content. Users no longer have to be experts or use specialist software to contribute their voices and ideas to products and services. As Amy C. Kimme Hea (2) asserts, social media “are interwoven into the political, rhetorical, and material work of technical communication scholars.” Within this changing workplace and academic landscape, the statement offers support and advice to technical communicators and other composition scholars.

Even in an age of persistent technological advances, where digitization and social media have entirely altered how texts are produced, this position statement remains fresh and convincing. It implies, but does not delimit, the range of scholarly possibilities in composition disciplines and thus supports and defends scholarship across a range of fields, including technical communication.
Interdisciplinarity after Writing

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The CCCC 1987 Position Statement “Scholarship in Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs” describes the interdisciplinarity of rhetoric and composition sometimes directly and sometimes subtly—but always gracefully, never tripping over that interdisciplinarity’s threatening implications for the institutional teaching of writing. Ramifications of our interdisciplinarity have troubled the discipline since well before 1987; now, twenty-five years after the statement’s publication, as we respond to and shape how we “write” with newer technologies and so expand the disciplines with...
which we “inter-,” we wonder whether we need a harder look at what we claim as our discipline’s core identity.

But let us build to that wonder.

From the beginning, the position statement teases us with tensions between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. The statement begins by acknowledging that rhetoric and composition is indeed a discrete discipline with its own conventions and expectations—but then the statement’s very first bullet point opens with “Composition research is characteristically interdisciplinary.” The statement does not ask readers to attend to this give-with-one-hand-take-with-the-other move; instead, that first bullet point goes on to describe that rhetoric and composition “draws on work from a variety of fields—literacy studies, classical and modern rhetoric, cognitive psychology, the history of instructional practices, studies in pedagogy, work in computer assisted instruction and artificial intelligence, and studies in linguistics and communication” because (we must infer this connection) rhetoric and composition “has taken as its subject the production, exchange, and reception of texts in a variety of settings.” Note how the bullet point’s final sentence defines “texts”: Rhetoric and composition, the statement details, “is concerned . . . with the practice and uses of writing both inside and outside the academy, particularly in settings not traditionally a part of literary studies—writing in the workplace, writing in the public arena (political speeches and public documents), writing in the schools or other institutional settings, writing in the home (letters, journals, autobiographies), and writing as it is practiced in the academic disciplines.” In 1987, for the statement’s authors, “text” equals “something written.”

Even before 1987, for the discipline to claim that its concern was writing, and writing alone, caused troubles. Sharon Crowley’s histories of the field’s practices in Composition in the University, for example, trace the different, and always political, stances institutions have taken on what should be the subject of first-year writing. Our field’s theories explain why what counts as “writing” differs in different locations and why we will always argue about whether we should be teaching grammar, product, process, or . . . Such arguments—tied in no small part to how writing being such an unruly and undefinable practice requires us to be interdisciplinary—can make the discipline seem to have no central identity, no “content” to teach.

Turn then to consider how, in the years since 1987, in parallel with computer use in our classrooms, composition teachers and students frequently move beyond writing, beyond linear alphabetic texts. Sometimes we start
with nonalphabetic or multimodal assignments because the cultural capital such texts carry with college-age students helps us move those students to consider writing; we can leverage what matters to students to show them how their working knowledge of nonalphabetic texts can be made discursive and then be transferred to academic and other formal writing. Sometimes we give nonalphabetic or multimodal assignments because we recognize that, outside the academy, few institutions or practices call for unimodal and conventionally academic alphabetic text. Although “traditional” texts such as written essays and formal research papers still sit centrally in many classes, such classes also ask for videos, new media pieces, or posters. All these texts—and the processes leading up to them and the reflections following them—involves words and writing, though the texts themselves need not contain any visible words.

This expansion invigorates—but also raises questions that have dogged composition since computers entered writing classes, questions that make the question of our interdisciplinarity still more plangent: How can we effectively teach skills specific to alphabetic writing and the technical skills for using computer programs and the design skills necessary to the media in which students work (video editing, for example, or gestalt theory for visual design)? And how do we teach all that with the critical alertness to history and situatedness with which we always surround the teaching of “just writing”? And what sorts of scholarship should we be doing so that we are best prepared to do all this teaching? In other words, just how much more interdisciplinary do we need to become if we are to address multimodality effectively in our classrooms and scholarship? Just how far can we sustain the push for multimodality without losing our identity as teachers of (just) writing?

Against the background and implications of those questions, we two finish the 1987 statement with two, contradictory, conclusions: Let’s “go back” to a focus on writing—or, let’s let the discipline and its word-identity deliquesce.

Conclusion 1: Let’s decide to help students really learn how to work with words—and only words. Let’s not get stretched thin with pictures and video. Just as we know that what students learn about the rhetoricality of pictures can carry over to words, let’s believe firmly that what students learn about the critical contexts and rhetoricality of words and other literacy practices can carry over to nonalphabetic texts—but let’s help them develop a rich and firm fluency with words (and then let people with a richer, professional knowledge of other modes help students learn those modes). Under this conclusion, we could leave the 1987 statement pretty much as is: The statement seems just
fine in describing what interdisciplinarities are necessary when the texts being analyzed and produced involve just words. Or . . .

**Conclusion 2:** Let’s fully commit to the melting and fusing of communication disciplines made possible through our current and digital practices. We can acknowledge that writers, orators, painters, sculptors, videographers, and musicians all compose with deeply rhetorical practices and, often, deeply critical and contextually aware practices—and that, just as written production involves different kinds of visualization, production of nonalphabetic texts involves writing. Sculptor Maya Lin, for example, describes how, with a new project, “I try to describe in writing what the project is, what it is trying to do. I need to understand the artwork without giving it a specific materiality or solid form” (3:05):

I feel writing is the best way to convey what the project will be. It allows me to describe not just the physicality of the works but how one will experience the works. These essays become an integral part of each piece, helping to define for me what the work is . . . and writing is the clearest form in which to capture what the work is about. (3:11)

With conclusion 2, it is not that writing classes become multimodal art production classes. Rather, with conclusion 2, we see how acknowledging what Lev Manovich described back in 2001—that with digitization, “graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces, and texts . . . become computable; that is, they comprise simply another set of computer data” (20)—perhaps asks us to acknowledge that we do not have to follow past practices of treating words, pictures, video, and sound, and the people who work with them as separate and hierarchically distinct phenomena. The disciplinary histories associated with these media would certainly need to be given a nod in any teaching, but that would not simply be a nod to the past; alertness to the historical articulations of media with class and gender structures, and hence with the composition of bodies that think and feel in disciplined ways, could help students in our classes (now shared with folks from what had once been other disciplines) potentially see the power of using multiple media alertly and in the best undisciplined ways. Under conclusion 2, and with a renewed and expanded sense of helping students understand and fluently use the currently available means of persuasion, students could (we believe) become even more strongly and effectively the critical communicators desired in current first-year composition classes.

To move toward conclusion 2, however, the discipline needs to do more than dissolve and reconstitute itself with other disciplines as it dissolves and
reconstitutes what we teach about communication, media, culture, and technology at the undergraduate level.

Some existing graduate programs in our field already do that work of providing students interdisciplinary environments for exploring the histories and articulations of bodies, media, communication, and teaching upon which we so quickly touch here—but conclusion 2 turns us back again to the 1987 statement on “Scholarship in Composition.” The statement existed to teach faculty, deans, and department chairs the varied looks and sites of appropriate-for-tenure rhetoric and composition publications (and to teach that those publications might not be traditional essays but seminars, workshops, textbooks, or software). If we do decide that our discipline needs to be so much more interdisciplinary so as to accommodate the changes wrought in no small part by changing communication technologies, then our scholarship should have still more varied looks and sites. We need not only to be writing print-only articles like this one you currently read; we need more sites like Kairos and Harlot, and we all need to produce more scholarly and across-disciplines multimodal texts everywhere to show just how interdisciplinary the discipline and its scholarship need to be if we are serious about interdisciplinarity not in 1987 but now.

**Note**

1. And when we approach nonalphabetic modes in this way, solely as an opening to the alphabetic, we risk dumbing down the other modes and missing their different potentials; see Alexander and Rhodes, 2014.

**Works Cited**


Candidates Announced: The CCCC Nominating Committee has named the following candidates for CCCC offices in the summer elections. Candidates for Assistant Chair (one to be elected; succeeding to posts of Associate Chair, Chair, and Immediate Past Chair for a four-year term to expire in December 2019) are: Carolyn Calhoun-Dillahunt, Yakima Valley Community College, Washington, and Sharon Mitchler, Centralia College, Washington.

Candidates for Secretary (one to be elected; term expires 2019) are: Clint Gardner, Salt Lake Community College, Utah, and Jessie L. Moore, Elon University, North Carolina.

Candidates for Executive Committee (seven to be elected, one from each pair of candidates; term expires December 2018) are: Doug Downs, Montana State University, Bozeman, and Neal Lerner, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts; Jessica Enoch, University of Maryland, College Park, and Roxanne Mountford, University of Oklahoma, Norman; Shanti Bruce, Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and Stephanie L. Kerschbaum, University of Delaware, Newark; Heather Ostman, SUNY Westchester Community College, New York, and Bo Wang, California State University, Fresno; Bruce McComiskey, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Tony Scott, Syracuse University, New York; John Duffy, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and David Gold, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Michael Faris, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, and T J Geiger II, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas.