

# Journals in Composition Studies, Thirty-Five Years After

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**T**hirty-five years ago in *College English*, Robert J. Connors published a capacious review of “Journals in Composition Studies,” part guide to authors and scholars, part history, part analysis, part defense, part advice to a then-adolescent field on how to shape itself through the member writing, part prognostication, part hope. For demographers and social scientists, thirty-five years constitutes a generation, more or less. Those of us in writing studies—or is it composition or is it rhet/comp?—are now watching the third disciplinary generation since the early 1980s assumption of centrality. The field’s pioneers from the 1950s and 1960s have almost all passed away, many long ago. Their apprentices, having succeeded to positions of scholarly prominence and professional leadership, are now retired or plan soon to do so.

Among those finishing careers, very likely, would have been Connors himself. Bob would have been 68 in 2019, had he survived being killed by a truck in the rain, a mile from home on his motorcycle, June 22, 2000. Then a professor at the University of New Hampshire, he was a vital scholar, teacher, WPA, and leader in rhetoric and composition studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Educated at Ohio State under Ed Corbett, beside peers Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede (who together later edited Connors’s *Selective Essays*), he was an historian of both

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classical rhetoric and of composition in American universities, especially in its nineteenth-century formation. One result was his fine 1997 history, *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Bob had an encyclopedic knowledge and a passionate dedication to writing—and to daily life, from planting orchards to fixing truck engines, as his colleague and friend Patricia Sullivan remembers. It’s intriguing to imagine what sense he’d have made of things today, especially the mixed blessing he anticipated of increased scholarly rigor coming at a cost of collegial familiarity. Would age have muted or magnified that confident voice that allowed him to declare of one publication, “As an academic journal it is frankly second rate” (Connors, “Journals” 358)?

The journal world of 2019 is vastly different from the journal world of 1984, certainly in terms of titles and topics and editors, but perhaps even more in terms of how journals function in a disciplinary ecology that would be nearly unrecognizable. One quick indication is to skim the appendix to Connors’s article, a list of fifteen journals, each with the names and street addresses of editors, several with separate addresses for subscriptions and advertisements. There are, of course, no email addresses, let alone websites. When I became editor of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* in 1994, each issue published a list of WPA members’ email addresses, and a graduate assistant, Bill Weakley, and I created the first website for the Council of Writing Program Administrators. That site included a page that directed authors, once their paper submission had been accepted, to send their articles on a floppy disk, preferably in WordPerfect.

Lest I be perceived to sink even further into some sappy Remembrance of Professions Past, conjured not by the scent of madeleines but by the sight of Palatino typeface, I have a larger point: the technological changes in means of distribution betoken a profound change in the relationship of journals to the field of composition studies. In an age of physical communications at measured paces and routines, knowledge was dolloped in measured portions. Subscribing to journals was not only a symbolic means of identification, even consubstantiation, with disciplinary conversations but also a practical means of accessing and deploying authority. (There was Northian lore, of course, circulating orally and experientially, but that’s another matter, to which I’ll return.) Extended runs of journal issues on an office shelf provided more than professorial décor; they expedited research and citation and affiliation much more readily than did trips to library stacks, and they constituted a physical record. Now, with more or less ubiquitous article access through libraries, journals have a different status.

Before fleshing out that and other claims, I’ll describe, as objectively as I can muster, the state of composition studies journals as they existed in the summer of 2018. Olivia Tracy, an exceptional doctoral student at The University of Denver, helped me collate many lists of journals in rhetoric and composition,

lists often compiled to introduce graduate students to the field, its resources, and publishing opportunities. From the lengthy list that resulted, I pulled those I recognized over the years as being in the field, and from them, Olivia and I determined which were still being published—not always an easy task. The result was a list of forty-five journals identified presently or historically with composition studies. At the foundation were the fifteen journals that Connors examined years ago.

For each journal, I discerned an editorial focus from its call for submissions or editor statements and from skimming three years' tables of contents. Part 1 further explains my decisions for what to include and to omit. Part 2 dives more deeply into a dozen journals, characterizing their contents and contributions. Two principles informed my choices. On the one hand was centrality, as manifested both in influence and in pertinence. I suppose there could have been an empirical way of going at this, researching circulation figures, Q Scores, citation indices, or other data analytics. I proceeded more essayistically, drawing on my interpretation of the field at present, informed by three decades in it. Someone else's list of forty-five (or thirty or sixty) might look quite different from mine, especially if they count technical writing, communication studies, or creative writing more centrally in writing studies than I did. Countering that restrictive impulse was a second principle: the desire to represent diverse directions and interests the field is taking. To this end, I included a number of relatively fledgling journals, though perhaps not as many as I might. For example, I didn't analyze *Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments*, though I admire its premise, appreciate its niche, and have skimmed issues. Part 3 interprets what all of this might mean for composition studies. What topics and questions are we embracing, and what are we sidestepping? Through what approaches? And, taking a license from Bob's work, what opportunities and responsibilities do we have as teachers and writers in composition studies?

## PART 1: THE TOWNSHIP OF CURRENT JOURNALS

### *Drawing the City Limits*

I aspired to put together as comprehensive a list of writing studies journals as seemed reasonable, collating lists that others had drawn, looking for inclusion on multiple lists as one measure of centrality.<sup>1</sup> Deciding which journals are current was a surprising challenge. In the thirty-five years since Connors, many journals have come—and several have gone. For example, *The ACE Journal*, from the Assembly on Computers in English, spun out some time in the past, as did *Basic Writing E-Journal*, *English Matters*, *Inventio*, *Lore*, *RhetNet* and many others.<sup>2</sup> I

kept a listing for *Harlot*—which had an interesting run from 2008 to 2016—wanting to preserve the journal’s innovations and aspirations for whatever historical record I might be creating here. *The Writing Instructor* is included courtesy of Connors, even though it seems to have last published in 2015. On the other end of the spectrum, while publications like *The Journal of Writing Analytics* may be premature because at the time I’m writing, only a single issue has appeared, I’ve included it because it has a significant editorial board, well-articulated focus, and reasonably safe home in the WAC Clearinghouse.

Including journals like *Harlot* tests a boundary question: What counts as being in writing/composition studies? The field of rhetoric has burgeoned in the past three decades and with it so has rhetorical criticism. Is all rhetorical criticism within the purview of composition studies? And is all rhetorical criticism rhetorical criticism, when so many titles begin with “The Rhetoric of” to casually invoke the subject? Something like *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society* is perhaps the limit case, having a mix of articles in rhetorical analysis, theory, and politics (consider April O’Brien’s article “Horrorism and Ontological Dignity: What Do/not Historical Signs Tell Us?”) but also focusing enough on concerns within the profession of composition studies (for example, reviewing Deborah Brandt’s *The Rise of Writing*) as to be within the fold. Even more of a stretch is *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, a fine “interdisciplinary journal devoted to the history, theory, and criticism of public discourse” (“*About*”), but not one centrally concerned with writing and composition studies, even if I can well expect composition scholars in the field to cite pieces published there.

Given the historically dappled nature of composition studies, as Janice Lauer put it, a journal’s absence from this list hardly casts it from salience to our field. Consider journals like *Visual Communication Quarterly*, for example, or the *Journal of Visual Communication and Image Representation* or *Visual Communication*, to cite but three examples in but one area that’s adjacent to, if not overlapping, composition studies. One could easily multiply the complexity by invoking journals in anthropology (*Cultural Anthropology*, for instance), education (*American Education Research Journal*, for example), creative writing (*The Writer’s Chronicle* or *Creative Writing Studies*) and so on. I thought long before excluding the venerable (1915) *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and related publications, finally deciding that if Bob declined, so would I. Similar questions arose about the many business and technical communication journals that adjoin and interweave composition studies. Ultimately, I excluded them and suggest these fields increasingly have become as distinct from composition studies as creative writing currently is taken to be. What constitutes the disciplinary status and boundaries of composition is one of the field’s preoccupations these days, marked by important collections like *Naming What We Know: Threshold*

*Concepts of Writing Studies* (Adler-Kassner and Wardle) and, especially *Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity* (Malenczyk et al.). (If only that last collection had offered an appendix on “Journals in Composition,” I’d have conveniently accepted that list as definitive.)

With these many provisos, then, Table 1 lists the journals in composition studies as I see them at present or in the very recent past. I’ve included the date each began publishing. For a subset of journals that I’ll discuss at greater length in Part 2, I’ve included three other descriptors: the average number of articles published per issue, the average length in pages of those articles, and the average number of citations per article. I gleaned these mundanely by counting and dividing things in the last three years of issues published up to July 2018. Articles continue to get longer, of course; in an age of digital publication, page number is a crude measure at best—and that doesn’t even take into account the difference between 11-point Garamond and 12-point Palatino. Mercifully, I found no Fraktur or Comic Sans.

The increased density of citation strikes me as most remarkable. That current authors cite previous scholarship more extensively than their forebears suggests both a more extensive body of scholarship in the field (i.e., there’s simply more TO cite) and a scholarly/editorial ethos that values reference and network, a sign of a discipline asserting itself. The categories of number and length are curiously more vexing. What constitutes an article? Do book reviews, columns, editors’ introductions, extended responses, and the like count? For these calculations, I somewhat arbitrarily decided no. However, I firmly assert that all of these “side genres” constitute important knowledge in the field, and a writer with more time and wherewithal than I had would have refined the analysis.

#### *The Established Neighborhood: Abandoned Properties and Venerable Victorians*

Bob discussed fifteen journals, and somewhat remarkably, all but two still publish. I mentioned the apparent demise of *The Writing Instructor*, the last trace of which I found in a 2015 issue devoted to queer issues. The most prominent disappearance was of *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Politics, and Culture*, which has not been officially announced deceased but which has not published since 2014. *JAC* was certainly one of the field’s top ten journals, probably one of the top five, during the height of its run. The journal began in 1980 as the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, sponsored by The Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition, a group that struggled to maintain an identity, for reasons that Connors anticipated. But contrary to Bob’s skepticism about its ability to attract “name” authors, the journal rocketed to ambitious heights. Under Gary Olson’s editorship and, later, Lynn Worsham’s, the journal substantially changed its course, publishing an extraordinary set of interviews with prominent rhetoricians as well

Table 1: Journals in composition studies 2018

JOURNAL	First Issue Published	Articles per Issue	Citations per Article	Average Article Length (pages)	Website
<i>Across the Disciplines</i> <sup>1</sup>	2004	4	35	22	<a href="https://wac.colostate.edu/atd/">https://wac.colostate.edu/atd/</a>
<i>Assessing Writing</i>	1994	6	48	14	<a href="https://www.journals.elsevier.com/assessing-writing">https://www.journals.elsevier.com/assessing-writing</a> <a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/home/bcq">http://journals.sagepub.com/home/bcq</a>
<i>Business and Professional Communication Quarterly</i>	1969				
<i>College Composition and Communication (CCC)</i> (in Connors)	1950	5	49	27	<a href="http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/ccc">http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/ccc</a>
<i>College English</i> (in Connors)	1939	4	51	22	<a href="http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/college-english/">http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/college-english/</a>
<i>Community Literacy Journal</i>	2006				<a href="http://www.communityliteracy.org/index.php/clj">http://www.communityliteracy.org/index.php/clj</a>
<i>Composition Forum</i>	1989				<a href="http://compositionforum.com/">http://compositionforum.com/</a>
<i>Composition Studies</i> <sup>2</sup> (in Connors)	1972	6	44	21	<a href="https://www.uc.edu/journals/composition-studies.html">https://www.uc.edu/journals/composition-studies.html</a>
<i>Computers and Composition</i>	1983	7	45	16	<a href="https://www.journals.elsevier.com/computers-and-composition">https://www.journals.elsevier.com/computers-and-composition</a> <a href="http://cconlinejournal.org/">http://cconlinejournal.org/</a>
<i>Computers and Composition Online</i>	2003				
<i>Discourse and Society</i>	1990				<a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/home/das">http://journals.sagepub.com/home/das</a> <a href="http://enculturation.net/">http://enculturation.net/</a>
<i>enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing and culture</i> <sup>3</sup>	1996	8	36		
<i>English Education</i> (in Connors)	1969	3	49	28	<a href="http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/english-education/">http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/english-education/</a>
<i>Harlot: A Revealing Look at the Arts of Persuasion</i> <sup>4</sup>	2008				<a href="http://harlotofhearts.org/index.php/harlot">http://harlotofhearts.org/index.php/harlot</a>

JOURNAL	First Issue Published	Articles per Issue	Citations per Article	Average Article Length (pages)	Website
<i>JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture and Politics</i> <sup>5</sup> (in Connors)	1980				<a href="http://www.jaconlinejournal.com">http://www.jaconlinejournal.com</a>
<i>Journal of Basic Writing</i> (in Connors)	1975				<a href="https://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/">https://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/</a>
<i>Journal of Business and Technical Communication</i>	1987				<a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jbt">http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jbt</a>
<i>Journal of Response to Writing</i>	2015	4	36	25	<a href="http://journalrw.org/index.php/jrw/issue/archive">http://journalrw.org/index.php/jrw/issue/archive</a>
<i>Journal of Second Language Writing</i>	1992				<a href="https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-second-language-writing">https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-second-language-writing</a>
<i>Journal of Teaching Writing</i> (in Connors)	1982	3	26	23	<a href="http://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/teachingwriting/">http://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/teachingwriting/</a>
<i>Journal of Writing Research</i>	2008				<a href="http://www.jowr.org">http://www.jowr.org</a>
<i>Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy</i> <sup>6</sup>	1996	8	41		<a href="http://kairos.technorhetoric.net">http://kairos.technorhetoric.net</a>
<i>KB Journal: The Journal of the Kenneth Burke Society</i>	2004				<a href="http://www.kbjournal.org">http://www.kbjournal.org</a>
<i>Literacy in Composition Studies</i>	2013	5	50	20	<a href="http://licsjournal.org/OJS/index.php/LiCS/issue/current/show Toc">http://licsjournal.org/OJS/index.php/LiCS/issue/current/show Toc</a>
<i>Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition and Culture</i>	2001	7	40	21	<a href="https://read.dukeupress.edu/pedagogy">https://read.dukeupress.edu/pedagogy</a>
<i>Peitho: Journal of Coalition of Feminist Scholars</i> <sup>7</sup>	1996				<a href="http://peitho.cwshrc.org">http://peitho.cwshrc.org</a>

JOURNAL	First Issue Published	Articles per Issue	Citations per Article	Average Article Length (pages)	Website
<i>Philosophy and Rhetoric</i>	1968				<a href="http://www.psypress.org/journals/jmls_pr.html">http://www.psypress.org/journals/jmls_pr.html</a>
<i>Praxis: A Writing Center Journal</i>	2003				<a href="http://www.praxisuwc.com">www.praxisuwc.com</a>
<i>Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society</i>	2010				<a href="https://www.presenttensejournal.org">https://www.presenttensejournal.org</a>
<i>Pre/Text</i>	1981				<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/110657315628876/about/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/110657315628876/about/</a>
<i>Programmatic Perspectives (Technical and Scientific Communication)</i>	2009				<a href="https://cptsc.org/journal/">https://cptsc.org/journal/</a>
<i>Reflections: A Journal of Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing and Service Learning</i>	2000	5	32	24	<a href="https://reflectionsjournal.net">https://reflectionsjournal.net</a>
<i>Research in the Teaching of English (in Connors)</i>	1967	4	54	25	<a href="http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/research-in-the-teaching-of-english/">http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/research-in-the-teaching-of-english/</a>
<i>Rhetoric and Public Affairs</i>	1998				<a href="http://msupress.org/journals/rpa/">http://msupress.org/journals/rpa/</a>
<i>Rhetoric Review (in Connors)</i>	1982	4	40	14	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hrhr20">https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hrhr20</a>
<i>Rhetoric Society Quarterly</i> <sup>8</sup>	1968				<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrsq20">https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrsq20</a>
<i>Rhetorica</i>	1983				<a href="http://rh.ucpress.edu">http://rh.ucpress.edu</a>
<i>Teaching English in the Two-Year College (in Connors)</i>	1974	3	31	19	<a href="http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/teaching-english-in-the-two-year-college/">http://www2.ncte.org/resources/journals/teaching-english-in-the-two-year-college/</a>
<i>Technical Communication Quarterly</i>	1992				<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/htrcq20">https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/htrcq20</a>



JOURNAL	First Issue Published	Articles per Issue	Citations per Article	Average Article Length (pages)	Website
<i>Technoculture: An Online Journal of Technology in Society</i>	2011				<a href="https://tcjournal.org">https://tcjournal.org</a>
<i>Writing Center Journal</i> (in Connors)	1980	9	31	27	<a href="http://www.writingcenterjournal.org">http://www.writingcenterjournal.org</a>
<i>Writing on the Edge</i>	1989				<a href="http://woejournal.ucdavis.edu/about">http://woejournal.ucdavis.edu/about</a>
<i>The Writing Instructor</i> <sup>9</sup> (in Connors)	1981				<a href="http://www.writinginstructor.org">http://www.writinginstructor.org</a>
<i>WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship</i> <sup>10</sup> (in Connors)	2015				<a href="https://wlnjournal.org">https://wlnjournal.org</a>
<i>WP4: Writing Program Administration</i> (in Connors)	1978	6	31	20	<a href="http://wpacouncil.org/journal/index.html">http://wpacouncil.org/journal/index.html</a>
<i>Written Communication</i>	1984	4	51	30	<a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/home/wcx">http://journals.sagepub.com/home/wcx</a>

1. Previously *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* (1994).
2. Previously *Freshman English News* (1972) and *Composition Studies/Freshman English News* (1992).
3. 7255 words per issue.
4. Harlot published its last issue (apparently) in 2016.
5. Previously, *Journal of Advanced Composition* (1980) and *J.A.C.: A Journal of Composition Theory* (1995). The last issue seems to have been published in 2014.
6. 8284 words per issue, though given the designs, words are frequently not the central element.
7. Previously *Peitbo: Newsletter of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition*.
8. Previously *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* (1968–1975).
9. The last issue of *The Writing Instructor* seems to have been published in 2015.
10. Previously *Writing Lab Newsletter* (1976–2015).

as theorists, from Jacques Derrida to J. Hillis Miller. In the 1990s age of high theory, *JAC* became the theory flagship within rhetoric and composition studies, and successive renamings chart a progression away from its curriculum-centric roots. Emulating the Kentucky Fried Chicken rebrand to KFC, the journal shed “Advanced Composition” and became first, *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory*, and then, more capaciously, *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics*.

Among the Connors corpus still published, one journal no longer fits the category. *English Education*, the journal of ELATE (English Language Arts Teacher Educators, the NCTE group formerly known as the Conference on English Education), now focuses almost entirely on professional and political issues in educating secondary and middle school teachers and on the worlds in which they live. Of some forty-seven articles I skimmed, only three centrally dealt with writing or its teaching. Mind you, many articles published are outstanding and broadly relevant to teacher preparation and English classrooms, but *English Education* is no longer a significant journal for composition studies.

That leaves a dozen other journals. Among them are *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, *College English (CE)*, and *Research in the Teaching of English (RTE)*, three publications that Bob identified as standing out from the rest. In many respects they still do because of their history and centrality, but times have surely changed, and the notion that any organization, even CCC or NCTE, can muster anything close to the field-orienting power it once had is almost quaint. The curious thing is that even as composition studies has matured, the organizational trappings that would seem to have marked its stature have frayed. Whereas NCTE had nearly 68,000 members in 1983 (down from 120,000+ in 1969), membership was down to 48,000 in 2003, and continued to decline, though it has stabilized in recent years. (Lindemann 438–41).

The changing times are apparent with *College English*, published a robust six times per year, as the journal of the NCTE College Section. Whereas section membership itself would once have garnered a subscription, now a *CE* subscription comes at a modest additional fee, no doubt a blow to circulation and ubiquity. That’s especially true when many composition scholars, deciding to subscribe to a single journal, instead select *CCC* or perhaps *TETYC*. *College English* has long positioned itself as a top-level generalist journal, providing “a forum in which scholars working within any subfield of English studies can address a cross-section of the profession” (“Editorial Policy”). Among the many appropriate submission areas are “the history, theory, and practice(s) of rhetoric and composition studies, literacy, literature, linguistics, media/technology, and creative writing, as well as other related professional issues” (“Editorial Policy”). Those are signaled by such recent articles as “Freshman Composition as a Precariat Enterprise” (Daniel)<sup>3</sup>, in a long political tradition common since

Richard Ohmann's editorship in the 1970s and surely before then. *CE* publishes an average of four articles an issue (somewhat fewer recently), with a mix of regular and themed issues in recent years. Themed issues since 2015 have been "Reimagining Leadership after the Public Turn," "Toward Writing Assessment as Social Justice," and "Translingual Work in Composition." In addition to that last themed issue, translingual articles occur frequently from 2015 to 2018, about as frequently as articles about women's rhetorical/textual practices ("Classbook Sense: Genre and Girls' School Yearbooks in the Early-Twentieth-Century American High School" [Lueck], "Feminist CHAT: Collaboration, Nineteenth-Century Women's Clubs, and Activity Theory" [Fredlund], "Sorority Rhetorics as Everyday Epideictic" (Hogg), to give just a sense). The majority of pieces published during that period are historical/analytical/archival in nature, identifying a genre, a body of texts, or a political/social movement and explicating through textual analysis their features, strategies, and implications. In a striking change from earlier decades, only a single article (Cynthia Lewis's "AND GLADLY TEACH Hearing a Play: Learning from Radio Shakespeare") during that three-year period has dealt with literature, canonical or non, traditional or new.

Composition's flagship remains *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*) published since 1950 as an NCTE conference journal <sup>4</sup>, now appearing quarterly. The editorship rotates systematically; in the time since Connors wrote, Rick Gebhart, Joe Harris, Marilyn Cooper, Deborah Holdstein, Kathi Yancey, and Jonathan Alexander have served in the role. Although the current general call for submissions invites "research on scholarship in composition studies that supports college teachers in reflecting on and improving their practices in teaching writing," *CCC* has moved steadily away from articles that might be perceived as applying directly to writing classrooms. Through the 1980s, *CCC* published a regular "Staffroom Interchange" section of practical teaching experiences and tips. In the past couple of decades, not only the section but also this kind of piece has mostly given way to emphases beyond teaching narratives, thus pushing more of a research status for the discipline rather than a pedagogical one. *CCC* has always published historical and theoretical work, and those pieces continue, often grounded in complex social, political (including the status of writing teachers and the discipline), and definitional complexities. The primary epistemology is close reading of corpora of artifacts, "primary" to "secondary," and arguing an interpretation/theory of them. There are relatively few quantitative/empirical studies. *CCC* remains, with *College English*, highly competitive, with an acceptance rate in the single digits.

*Research in the Teaching of English* (*RTE*) continues as a quarterly journal that "reports substantive findings and models research in the field," including not only "traditional genres of reporting empirical research" but also "narrative

and other genres of research reporting” (“Submission Guidelines” *RTE*). The loci of research are about evenly distributed between college and pre-college classrooms, learners, topics, or teachers, with a scattering of extra-academic literacy and linguistic situations, too. So, for example, *RTE* publishes pieces ranging from “Writing (Righting) Inclusion and Equity in a Child’s Transition to School” (Dyson) to “Cross-Disciplinary Analytic Moves in First-Year College Student Writing” (Wilder and Yagelski). Befitting its claim for English, not composition, about half the articles deal with literature or literacy (often through lenses of second language, gender, race, or ethnicity), the other half with writing per se. With occasional exception, *RTE* articles feature some quantitative analysis of student artifacts, teaching or literacy teaching or practice situations, or attitudes. This is true even when a study is grounded in qualitative methods, with observations subjected to coding as a first analytic move; that’s the case with 108 hours of classroom observations plus interviews in one recent article (Garcia et al.) or, even, in a year-long case study of a high school ESL student (Qin).

Connors singled out what’s now *Composition Studies* (*CS*) as the leading contender with the NCTE journals. *CS* began in 1972 as *Freshman English News*, spent 1992 through 1998 as *Composition Studies/Freshman English News*, and twenty years ago dropped the slashed legacy name. Along the way, it reduced its 8.5 x 11 newsletter trim size to library shelf dimensions and became perfect bound. It thus synecdochized the field as a whole, moving from the domain of first-year writing (and ditching “freshman”) and foregrounding “studies,” promoting writing as an object of research, not just of teaching. The journal retains a regular Course Design feature, whereby professors explain and theorize particular courses they’ve taught, usually featuring a somewhat-specialized theme or circumstance, not “Rhetoric and Composition 101” but rather “Taco Literacy: Public Advocacy and Mexican Food in the U.S. Nuevo South” (Alvarez) or “Working with Disciplinary Artifacts: An Introductory Writing Studies Course for Writing Majors” (Ostergaard). Another striking feature of *CS* under Laura Micicche’s editorship has been a series under the umbrella Composing With, short essays in which “practitioners in various arts and humanities disciplines” write about their composing processes, rituals, materials, and so on. These sections, along with extensive book reviews, convey a humanistic journal with few resonances elsewhere, most notably in *Writing on the Edge*. So the journal includes first-person, largely narrative analyses of teaching situations (Hahn, “Reviewing Writing, Rethinking Whiteness”) as well as case studies (Voss, “Who Learns from Collaborative Digital Projects?”) and survey-based empirical studies, replete with *z*-tests and *p*-values (Ray et al., “Rethinking SETs”). *Composition Studies* is a capacious, eclectic journal serving a broad set of composition interests.

At the time Connors wrote, only three issues of *Rhetoric Review* had appeared.

He characterized it as a “truly general journal,” produced with such a quality as perhaps to rival *Freshman English News* as the primary non-NCTE journal. Certainly, *RR* has persevered and thrived, though its earlier volumes offered more composition (in the sense of being directly related to teaching writing) than have recent ones. Composition mostly figures in the books that are regularly reviewed. I’d be remiss not to acknowledge the passing in 2016 of its founding editor, Theresa Enos, who began the journal in 1982. Several colleagues, friends, and scholars celebrated her contributions in a 2017 Burkean Parlor, a regular symposium feature that she’d instituted years earlier. From Theresa’s last volumes to the present, *RR* has published an eclectic array of rhetorical history, theory, and criticism, from readings of classical Greek and Roman theorists to analyses of early modern and nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts, artifacts, and traditions. Consider, for example, articles on women’s rhetorical practices during WWI, on satire in *The Onion*, on Plato’s *Phaedrus*, on ghostwriting for Syngman Rhee, on Vietnam-era recruitment brochures, and the vast territory in between. Such articles, along with a regular historical thread about schools and schooling, have been part of *Rhetoric Review* from the outset.

*Teaching English in the Two Year College (TETYC)* has a broad appeal. Connors’s characterization of it as a “second tier” journal has long been unwarranted, unless one categorically dismisses teaching-focused articles as inferior. Of course, any article that conveys no awareness of other scholarship is suspect, and it’s been true in the past that “here’s what I do” pieces have tended to stand on islands. To be fair, What Works for Me has continued as a feature in *TETYC*, along with such other categories as Instructional Notes, Review Essays, Symposia, Reviews, and Personal Essays— that last including writing “of any length that describes or reflects on a teacher’s experiences” (“Submission Guidelines” *TETYC*). But there are traditional articles, generally three or four per quarterly issue, richly cited and contextualized. Even with that, the journal overall has something of the cast of a magazine that readers pick up out of interest, expecting pertinence and applicability. I take that as strength, and it’s a quality that Bob picked up when he forgave the publication for perceived scholarly shortcomings because it so well fit the needs and interests of its readers. Those readers include many who don’t teach in two-year colleges, including, enthusiastically, me. As with most other journals, social/political/professional topics show up from time to time. The May 2018 issue featured several articles on academic freedom and working conditions, and the September 2017 issue focused on preparing two-year college teachers.

The journal formerly known as *The Writing Lab Newsletter* remains little changed since Connors wrote. Until a couple years ago, it appeared as a bimonthly sixteen-page 8.5 x 11 newsletter, with short articles (one to three of them),

a tutor's column, and lots of professional announcements. In becoming *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, the journal cut its trim and increased to thirty-two pages, though the news features continue, a stable, predictable space in the age of websites and social media.

More substantial is *Writing Center Journal*, just slightly younger than *WLN*, and coming out twice per year, with an average of nine articles per issue, each generally manifesting the prescribed 6,000- to 10,000-word article length, resulting in issues of 200 to 300 pages. Connors wondered about the fledgling journal's ability to transcend newsletter status. Clearly it did, concomitantly with the rise of writing centers as a subdiscipline and field of professional practice. While the journal publishes an occasional book review and, even less frequently, a review essay about a comprehensive topic, it's mostly articles. Those pieces tend to explain and explore writing center practices, often through mostly qualitative research (the nature of student/tutor interactions, case studies of different populations of students), often through explaining, theorizing, and research writing center practices (the efficacy of classroom visits, online tutoring), and fairly regularly providing primers on emerging topics. Although writing centers have largely undergone a thorough professionalization in the past decades, with trained permanent professional leaders increasingly heading them, some articles include elements to catch up newcomers to the field. There's also a recurring theme concerning professional status and institutional position, something common across every aspect of the field.

Finally, some observations on a couple of "legacy" journals. The *Journal of Teaching Writing* persists now into its thirty-third volume, still published by the Indiana Teachers of Writing, out of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, with a national editorial board. The journal continues a longstanding practice of inviting articles for writing teachers at all levels, preK through university, though the wide majority aim at the college level. About half the articles report relatively modest research studies that take as the focus of study classroom practices or student responses. Other articles carefully explain, illustrate, and analyze/theorize assignments or teaching strategies. Both types feature extensive citations and references. There are frequent review essays of multiple books, as well as single book reviews. That the instructions for authors have long been unchanged is clear from the direction that "Macintosh users should save their work as Word for Windows documents."

In 1984, *WPA: Writing Program Administration* had not long previously transitioned from newsletter to journal under Ken Bruffee's founding, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators had yet to complete its first decade. Program administration was just beginning to make the transition from an "accidental" to an "intentional" pursuit: from something one was asked to do—for

reasons as much concerning managerial acumen as intellectual expertise—to a career goal, even aspirational first job for some graduate students, abetted by graduate courses in program administration and even degree tracks. Accompanying/facilitating all of this has been an extensive number of books and articles on administrative issues, these last frequently appearing in *WPA*. Topics include placement and assessment, labor conditions, research on practices across the profession, strategies for professional development, professional (and personal) advancement in program administration, and so on.

An important distinction for Connors was between those journals published by professional associations, most notably NCTE, and independent ones. He granted the former more power and prestige, and certainly by continued acceptance rates, that remains true. However, as reflected in diminishing membership numbers, associations have perhaps less central sway in the profession than they did decades back. Partly this is due to multiple, diffuse streams of information and professional contact, braided deltas of distribution rather than large-channeled rivers headwatered in places like Urbana, IL. Significantly this is due to the explosion of books in the field, especially edited collections, some of them facilitated by digital distribution or on-demand printing. Special issues of journals dedicated to topics or themes still appear regularly, of course, but there's some vestigial prestige of the book over the journal, especially as journals themselves are so frequently encountered now through disembodied articles in databases. It is pure speculation, likely ungrounded, but the arrival of a journal issue decades ago was an occasion for reading most of the whole thing; it was a rare message from The Field, an event. Perhaps, too, more people now desire to select and edit—perhaps to constitute their own communities of scholars for the space of a volume—than there are chances to edit journals, not to mention the unrelenting pace over time. That said, new journals have kept coming, with the large majority of them not sponsored by professional associations.

## PART 2: NOTABLE NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

Dozens of journals have appeared (with some then disappearing) since the mid 1980s, their editorial orientations reflecting new writing studies neighborhoods. One of Connors's aspirations was to demonstrate how composition was becoming a discipline through the increasing scholarly seriousness of its articles and by the proliferation of specialized areas. Those trends accelerated, as writing studies moved beyond first-year comp, beyond alphanumeric modes of composing and circulation, beyond classrooms into programs and larger constructions, beyond canonical texts and genres, beyond reading and writing to literacy, with every rich complication of status and identity, both those claimed and imposed.

Writing Across the Curriculum articles had certainly appeared in journals (Janet Emig’s classic “Writing Is a Mode of Learning,” for example), and Fulwiler and Young’s landmark *Language Connections* appeared in 1982. But it wasn’t until the 1990s that a journal focused on WAC appeared.<sup>5</sup> Determining which was first is something of a definitional quandary. By one perspective, *The WAC Journal*, still published annually, claims primacy, starting in 1989 as the *Plymouth State College Journal on Writing Across the Curriculum*, publishing only pieces written by Plymouth State (New Hampshire) faculty. In 2000, the editors opened the journal to outside writers and declared it “national.” That national identity was solidified in the next couple of years with a national editorial board and, in 2002, a new cover and the current name, with a notable editorial board. By 2011, the journal had hit a funding crisis, as journals do, issuing a plea for the \$6000 needing to keep it running, and Clemson University/Parlor Press came to the rescue.<sup>6</sup>

By the measure of being a “national journal from onset,” *Across the Disciplines* is the earlier publication. Its predecessor, *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, started in 1994, being renamed in 2004. Appearing digitally on the WAC Clearinghouse site, *ATD* annually publishes four issues, which vary in length, some as short as one or two articles plus book reviews, others featuring eight or more pieces. This peer-reviewed (by editorial board members), open-access journal regularly publishes special themed issues, many of them guest edited, and these tend to be longer. Recent themed issues have included “WAC and High-Impact Practices,” “Teaching Assistants and Writing Across the Curriculum,” and “WAC, WID, and the Performing and Visual Arts.” Articles are a mix of researched pieces (both qualitative and quantitative) and “practice” pieces describing curricular or pedagogical approaches with a “how X did Y” framework, with an occasional conceptual or theoretical essay mixed in.

A second emphasis that exploded after 1984 was technology and writing. Back in these pre-network, pre-WYSWYG, pre-JPEG, pre-color monitor days, early journals focused on word-processing effects on writing processes and the potential for software to provide instruction, often through tutorials and quizzing or heuristics, such as Hugh Burns’s TOPOI. These were the days of Writer’s Workbench and Grammatik. A CCCC special interest group, The Fifth C: Computers, met in 1983, the same year that the newsletter that begat *Computers and Composition* appeared, edited by Cindy Selfe and Gail Hawisher, one of the field’s most accomplished tag teams. Even as *Computers and Composition* now features topics unimagined three decades ago—multimodality, sonic landscapes, gaming, bots, #GamerGate, persona construction in social media, and so on—there remain vestiges of research questions from the founding days. Recent articles include a quantitative analysis of composing with paper versus



composing with Chromebooks (Kimmons et al.) and a big-data analysis of student revisions (Holcomb and Buell). In mostly following its mission of “exploring the use of computers in writing classes, writing, programs, and writing research,” with perhaps fewer forays into rhetorical and cultural analysis, *Computers and Composition* has a college-focused orientation, though it regularly publishes research on lower grades (*Computers*). A sister journal, *Computers and Composition Online*, sharing the same editor (Kris Blair) and, even, the same styled logo, features work that is “web-aware,” designed to use the affordances of digital, online publication, privileging nonlinear texts. This dynamic is most explicit with the editorial proscription against “purely text-based submissions such as Microsoft Word” (“Submission Guidelines” *Computers and Composition Online*). The journal ostensibly has five submission categories: Theory into Practice (research based), Professional Development (CFPs, interviews, etc.), Reviews (software and apps as well as books), Virtual Classroom (including teaching artifacts like syllabi and student projects), and Print to Screen (connections to the print journal); however, these last two haven’t been active since 2015. In fact, the last two years have simply listed “Features,” eight and nine of them respectively, so the conventional practices of volumes and issues don’t pertain.

I’ll note that *College Composition and Communication* has tried two versions of a similar web-based companion publication, *CCC Online*. The second incarnation, intended to publish “stand-alone webtexts of digitally-mediated research and scholarship,” produced but a single guest-edited issue in 2012, then flickered out even as its submission information remains on the CCCC site (*CCC Online*).

A substantially more robust journal (now more than twenty years old) that embraces the affordances of digital production and distribution is *Kairos: A Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, which publishes web texts and explicitly abjures print essays or works born and raised in word processors. Embracing a Creative Commons ethos, *Kairos* distributes materials widely and freely, seeking works in four peer-reviewed categories (Topoi, Inventio, Praxis, and PraxisWiki) and four categories that are editorially reviewed (Reviews, Interviews, Disputatio [including manifests and rants], and KairosCast). Many of the journal’s articles fully enact multimodality, hypertextually mixing video, image, sound, and text; consider, for example, “Welcome to the Letters of Anna Calhoun Clemson” (Quigley). Some few are more conventional linear texts integrating some graphic elements (for example, Cohn, “User Testing Student ePortfolios”). It’s striking that the field doesn’t by now have more journals that have embraced multimodality to the extent *Kairos* has. This may underscore a fundamental conservatism of the discipline, or it may be that journals are less desirable publishing venues than are other means.

More typical of online journals is *enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing and culture*, born in the same era as *Kairos* but preserving a more traditional article feel, table of contents, and so on—with the key distinction that pieces are published on a rolling basis, with issues “declared” to cover periods of time rather than released at prescribed intervals. As a “refereed journal devoted to contemporary theories of rhetoric, writing, and culture,” *enculturation* of late has published more rhetorical theory and criticism, with occasional research studies, than it has pieces on composition pedagogies or programs. Several of the articles have an essayistic/journalistic cast, which makes for engaging reading, even as those pieces have extensive citations.

An aside. Given the wide development of online journals, it’s entertaining to think of an important controversy active in the 1990s: How much should tenure and promotion committees “count” online publications, which were presumed to lack the rigor, edited quality, permanence, and prestige of print? With digital publication nearly now the default, especially for new journals, and certainly with more journal articles read online than in paper, the question has obviously been settled. Quality that counts is a function of selectivity and editorial care, not medium. That said, the printed page remains the default design for the majority of even exclusively online journals; print is embodied in the pdf.

*Assessing Writing* began in 1994 and reflects the administrative and scholarly interests emerging more strongly then. The journal has a strongly empirical cast, with research studies predominating, most featuring statistical analyses. There have been long-standing debates within composition studies about whether the field is grounded in a social-science paradigm, perhaps as transmuted through research as practiced in colleges of education, or whether the field is grounded in a humanistic tradition, relying on the textual analysis of literary studies or other interpretive paradigms. Steve North’s landmark *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* delineated these traditions and more, and the celebratory answer has long been, “Both, of course!” In point of fact, however, different journals reasonably value different paradigms, and *Assessing Writing* sponsors mainly social science research. It also significantly values articles dealing with some aspect of English language learners or L1/L2 language assessment, with one-third or so of the recent three years focused there. Perhaps coincidentally—or perhaps not—the current editors note that up to 40 percent of the journal’s articles now come from international (that is, not North American) authors. I suggest the more interesting question for this authorship deals less with the topics they treat than the research methods they employ. As composition studies moves outside America, it strikes me that empirical approaches are finding greater purchase

abroad than here. Perhaps this has to do with particular backgrounds in scholarly enculturation, perhaps with what's valued for professional advance, perhaps with the ascendancy of "composition" over "rhetoric" in international universities.

That international/empirical nexus is obvious in another journal, the *Journal of Writing Research*, a relative newcomer, first appearing in 2008. An open-access, peer reviewed journal appearing online three times a year, *JoWR* is as international as they come. Of the nine editors and associate editors, only two are American, the others all European. Of thirty editorial board members, only four are American, the rest from around the world. The focus is on writing, not necessarily writing in English, and schoolchildren and settings are thoroughly represented. *JoWR* foregrounds empirical research (experimental, survey, or case study) for "the scientific community," privileging "scientific studies of the processes by which writing is produced or the means by which writing can be effectively taught" (*Journal of Writing Research*). This is the realm of traditional educational research using social science methods, with method paramount, most economically illustrated by an entire special issue (10.2) devoted to "recommendations for reporting instructional interventions in writing research" (Bouwer and De Smedt). The often cognitivist orientation of the journal is signaled to American readers by the dense representation of work from the 1980s by researchers like Linda Flower and John Hayes.

The leading empirical research journal in composition studies for years has arguably been *Written Communication*, founded by Steve Witte and John Daly shortly after the appearance of Connors's review. Like *JoWR*, *WC* has an international perspective that regularly studies writing in languages other than English. The journal's current call for submissions identifies authors and readers as coming "from fields including anthropology, education, English, literacy, psychology, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, and writing studies" ("Aims and Scope"). This explicitly interdisciplinary orientation is reflected in there being a couple dozen "topics of interest" to the journal, admitting a range of methodologies—as long as they are "handled expertly." Two recent issues, for example, included an experimental study (Wolfe et al.), a linguistic analysis of thematic structure in texts (Leong et al.), two qualitative analyses conducted through exhaustive textual coding (Imbrenda; Gruber), a study of how technologies shape writing processes (Ching), an interpretivist qualitative study of student multimodal texts (Anderson et al.), a discourse-centered online ethnography (Christiansen), an analysis of coming out narratives (Cloud), and an experimental study of cognition using interventions to record reaction time (Olive).

*Pedagogy* began in 2001 as "a discipline-wide, mainstream research journal devoted to teaching English at the college and university level" (Holberg and

Taylor 1). In other words, the journal sought to inhabit the terrain ostensibly occupied by *College English*, a journal that *Pedagogy's* founding editors explicitly acknowledged before asserting, that

in a profession in which a large portion of our scholarly work concerns itself with teaching, it is ironic that no single journal is exclusively devoted or consistently committed to exploring that work across the discipline and from a range of perspectives. (Holberg and Taylor 1)

About half the journal is devoted to strategies, practices, and research in teaching literature, with about a quarter of recent articles on composition or writing and a good additional scattering discussing creative writing. The remaining articles, often in thematic clusters, could appear these days in composition journals, even if the subject matter is broad. Consider, five articles in a “Cluster on Race in the English Studies Classroom” in volume 17.1 (January 2017), with pieces from writing scholars Ersula Ore and Amanda Wray, among others. Or a roundtable of “Veterans Voices” (16.3), an issue on “Reading” (16.1), or an issue on “Pedagogical Responses to Disability.” With an average of seven longish articles per issue, with many shorter pieces (three to ten pages, with ten or fewer citations), and mostly written in a conversational style, *Pedagogy* generally delivers on its discipline-wide aspiration with intriguing variety, in a publication that comes out three times a year, at 175 to 200 pages per issue.

Other recent publications carve narrower niches. *Reflections* publishes standard-length articles about community-engaged writing (service learning, civic writing, community literacy, and so on). In addition to scholarly research articles (including student research pieces) the journal invites brief profiles of organizations, projects, and courses, as well as personal essays. *Response to Writing*, published twice a year since 2015, is “a peer-reviewed, open-access journal dedicated to refining response practices for better writing.” The editors invite submission in three categories: “Theory-driven research articles that have practical applications for teaching,” “Action research and application that’s ready to be used in the classroom,” and “Editorials that offer insight into disagreements in domains of linguistics, composition, and second-language teaching” (“Submission Overview” *Journal of Response to Writing*).

*Literacy in Composition Studies*, which started publishing in 2013, has an explicit composition focus, obviously reflected in its title, but the journal’s sweep is broader than composition per se, reaching beyond the academy to explore literacy in various circumstances and manifestations. The Fall 2018 issue, for example, is devoted to practices among older adults. The Fall 2017 issue, thematically focused on literacy, democracy, and fake news, has some articles that fairly specifically invoke composition classrooms and programs (ones by David Riche

and by Christopher Minnix), but has others that do so at most by implication. The journal's Symposium feature invites extensions, connections, and complications of previously published articles, and they frequently connect to direct professional issues in composition studies. *LiCS* publishes an enticingly eclectic range of work, some of it historical, some of it place- or situation-based, some dealing with transnational and ELL concerns, some with academic labor. There are regular book reviews and occasional interviews and special themed issues.

Finally, representing an architectural tradition fairly different from any of the journals I've discussed so far, *Writing on the Edge* has published essays on writing that have a pronounced touch of belletrism. For the past decade or so, *WOE* has awarded the Donald Murray Prize for a piece about writing and/or teaching, and recent winners have been works of creative nonfiction. *WOE* regularly publishes interviews, but whereas *JAC* featured prominent theorists, *WOE* has showcased writers like John Barth or Susan Orlean and, more prominently, writing scholars and teachers, from Jim Berlin to Peter Elbow, James Moffett to Nancy Welch, Walker Gibson to Lynn Bloom, Ken Macrorie to Linda Adler-Kassner, and dozens more. (Many teaching interviews are collected in *Teachers on the Edge*, a volume edited by John Boe.) The journal's rare position in the field is characterized by its submission policy:

We publish articles that capture the excitement of writing and teaching, so we encourage authors to experiment with other forms besides the traditional academic journal article. As is our tradition, we are still looking for a wide range of genres, including personal essays, humor, and fiction, but we are open to further explorations into multimodal and mixed genres. We publish everything from creative nonfiction and poetry to excerpts of graphic novels and literacy narratives. ("About" *Writing on the Edge*)

*WOE* is on composition studies' border with creative writing, with publications like *The Writer's Chronicle* from AWP or literary journals, with scholarly writing not only as a vehicle for conveying knowledge but creating interesting artifacts. There are tinges of *WOE*'s ethos in other journals (I pointed out something of this flavor in *Composition Studies*), and I would not be surprised to see a stronger privileging of narrative and the personal essay occur in further corners of our field, decades after the smart and successful political critiques of the expressive and poetic.

I've tried to characterize a few journals that strike me as significant and, in doing so, give some topography of our field's varied terrain. With endless space, I could have discussed many more. For example, the rise of undergraduate research journals in the field is striking, with *Young Scholars in Writing* accepting submissions for its seventeenth annual volume in 2018, and *Queen City Writers* and *TheJUMP+* each more than seven volumes. No doubt I've omitted deserv-

ing journals, some of those exclusions meriting my embarrassment. Others have emerged so recently that I can't yet predict their future. Consider the still-nascent *Constellations: A Cultural Rhetorics Publishing Space*. With apologies for what I've neglected, and with confidence that others wiser than I am will complete and correct the record, I'll next share some impressions of what this all means.

### PART 3: BUILDING TRENDS, ZONING, AND THE FUTURE

In the late 1990s, Bob Connors came to teach and lecture at Illinois State University in Normal. He had an extra day and wanted to see the Lincoln sites in Springfield. While walking around, we came across the poet Vachel Lindsay's house, and Bob mentioned he'd won a junior high oratory contest reciting a Lindsay poem. I mentioned that the state archives housed Lindsay's strangely wonderful drawings and paintings. "Let's see them," he said.

When we got there, it was late afternoon, people were starting to leave work, and we were told there was no one to retrieve the Lindsay archive for us. "That's too bad," I said, "because Dr. Connors is an eminent Lindsay scholar from the University of New Hampshire and only here today." A small lie, but a lie.

"Well, in that case, let's see what I can do." Five minutes later another woman appeared with a cart and several large folios, which she spread across a few tables. Bob knew enough about Lindsay to carry on an intelligent conversation with her; she turned out to be the State Librarian. Perhaps as penance for our duplicity, my car got a flat tire on the drive back to Normal, and he helped me fix it.

That afternoon is much closer to Connors's 1984 article than it is to the day you're reading this, closer to the time when Bob characterized composition studies as being "in a transitional period right now, and our periodical literature mirrors both our solidarity and our divisions." He believed that only in the two previous decades "have we begun to develop a scholarly literature that really deserves that name" (364). But this needed sophistication came at a cost of fragmentation, he thought, and whereas a dedicated member of the profession could once command the field, that perspective was now impossible. Today, there are three times as many journals as then, and the fractured interests that disunited us in the 1980s have surely re- and subfractured since. Perhaps this specialization of knowledge reflects the maturing of composition studies as a discipline, with enough areas of deep knowledge and interest that scholars cannot—ought not—keep up with all of them, in the way that no historian can, no physicist, biologist, or literary scholar.

No doubt there are dedicated folks who regularly read both *Written Communication* and *enculturation*, both *Composition Studies* and the *Journal of Writing*

*Research*, both *Writing Center Journal* and *Literacy in Composition Studies*, but I suspect they're rare. This review pushed me to browse a sweep of journals well beyond my customary handful. Now, I do read lots of articles from many other journals but mostly on a research-driven, as-needed basis, chasing down a citation or fact or finding for a project. But in doing that, I'm reading articles, not journals. I hypothesize that others, like me, rarely read journals to catch up. We read isolated articles out of an exigency, including someone having pointed out a piece in conversation or on social media.

I included the anecdote about Connors in Springfield partly to dramatize the passage of time, but for another reason, too. That afternoon's ramble metaphorically represents a relationship to journal knowledge in our field that's now fairly unusual. Bob and I had come to a place on one pretext, and while we were there, we met a chance opportunity. Abraham Lincoln and Vachel Lindsay and the State Librarian were an unlikely conjunction collocated by a specific place. Physically being there made connections possible. I learned something about Lindsay and about Bob by being there, for a reason less practical and instrumental than experiential.

Even twenty years ago, the arrival of a journal issue, a physical thing in the mail, was an event. The profession came portioned in predictable servings. Subscribing was a form of power because you weren't dependent on access to the library's copy or a colleague's. The advent of digital library subscriptions through services like JSTOR changed that dynamic (although, yes, access limitations exist, even when circumvented by exchanging pdfs). The demise of newspapers and legacy media in the digital age has been diagnosed exhaustively, but the most interesting analyses have focused on the erosion of an informational commons. True, many stories from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* get wider reading now than they ever have—but decoupled from the ritual of the daily paper. A parallel thing has happened in journals, with the issues being less crucial as containers than as pretexts for quality content.

One wonders, in an age of instant publishing and rapidly circulating information and ideas, whether the age of journals, like Tolkien's age of elves, has passed. Isn't it anachronistic to write something and wait months or years for it to appear in print, accompanied by all the fussy ritual conventions of style and formatting? Haven't any of us written something that, on its eventual publication, struck us as embarrassingly out of date? On the one hand, I'd answer, "Sure." But I'd argue that the journal function remains vital, even if the status of journals has dramatically changed. There is, of course, the crucial value of peer reviewing and editing, a matter of quality that's vital to any discipline—and not only for the credentialing purposes of merit raises, tenure, and promotion. I'm as fond as anyone of news and ideas circulating quickly through blogs and emails

and social media, but that's not the journal function. Journals exist unabashedly as gatekeepers, and that's much more a good thing than a bad, just as the fussy editorial fact-checking and rules of sourcing and evidence matter in *The Washington Post*. Does good stuff get rejected by journals? Sure. But there are other ways of circulating that good stuff—and these days, other good journals.

As important as the reviewing/editing/credentialing function is something more subtle: the time function. There's something healthy and worthy about working on an article through drafting and revision, writing it with a sense of committing it not only to the present but to the future, locating it in the context of previous work, knowing it will be critiqued and examined before it's published. There's something worthy and important about writing that takes time and effort and getting it as right as one can get it. I'm surely not saying that everything that faculty in our field write should conform to that standard. I celebrate the everyday writing of blogs and emails and social media. But the discipline of journal publication holds us to a different, important standard, one that varies from publication to publication but asks of each writer, "Is this the best you can do, given the best that we are?"

In the decades since Connors, we've acquired new models of journal sponsorship and publishing. There remain organization-sponsored journals, such as the NCTE coterie or *WPA*, with subscription through membership and organizational traditions and policies for editor succession, makeup of editorial boards, even structures for advertising and, one hopes, archiving. There remain free-standing journals like *Rhetoric Review* or *Composition Studies* that have acquired stability over the years. They often depend on institutional support (and are subject to institutional fragilities) and have insinuated themselves into databases to have stability. A challenge for emerging independent journals is to attract authors and readers and a professional presence. With history strewn with journals gone after a handful of volumes, the future is unclear for energetic startups like *Constellations*. While digital publication surmounts many obvious financial barriers (though not all), how do these journals get established in professional mainstreams or sidestreams, most substantially through inclusion in databases beyond publication on websites? And what happens when independent journals fold, their editors wearying or institutions balking? What happens when domains disappear, a familiar form of the broad problem of the digital archive versus the physical? Some journals (*Literacy in Composition Studies*, for example) have arranged preservation through agreements with potent depositories like CLOCKSS (Controlled Lots Of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe), which archives scholarly materials at twelve universities around the world, keeping those materials "dark" until a triggering event releases them (CLOCKSS).

A more recent strategy has been to attach journals to for-profit publishers



like Elsevier; *Computers and Composition* is an example. A variant is association with not-for-profit, institutionally based production/distribution/archiving entities. The two large current power brokers are the WAC Clearinghouse (rooted in Colorado State University under publisher Mike Palmquist) and Parlor Press (rooted in Clemson University under publisher David Blakesley), each supporting journals and book series—sometimes the sites in collaboration with each other. These consortium efforts recognize the virtues of centrality and stability, though perhaps with questions of sustainability. Founders and university administrations change. Mike Palmquist has described how the WAC Clearinghouse is backed up through the Colorado State University library servers and how the board has considered various succession plans.

Reading through so many journals has left me with a few impressions of the field. First, I note a political turn, manifesting in two domains. One is the relationship between power and the identities/subjectivities of literacy learners/rhetorical actors. These articles, variously grounded in case studies or interpretation of artifacts and discourses, may once have arced ultimately to teaching implications, but perhaps more likely now they end as idea, theory, or call for political, not classroom action. The second domain is the politics of the profession itself: the working conditions of teachers, the status of writing programs, the conditions of higher education, especially issues of gender, sexuality, and so on as they affect professors and programs. Composition studies has long worried (with justification) about its stature and status, and these worries (perhaps perversely) have often generated a unifying esprit d' corps, a band-of-brothers-and-sisters. But our journal literature has escalated this discourse to the level of the profession studying (often critiquing) its own professionalism, including the state of the job market, the dismal status of academic labor, the prospects of graduate education in the field, and so on. We're starting to see articles analyzing our own discourses, taking as subject matter things like WPA-L, the WPA listserv. However, I was reassured that the overall percentage of articles dealing with what I'll call the political economy of writing studies isn't even more dense. No doubt because of the journals and subject media I mostly follow, I had a skewed sense of things. We are, in fact, mostly talking about writers and writing, if less about processes and pedagogies, than about identity and circumstance.

Another strong turn of late has been the interpretive: scholarship dedicated to presenting, explaining, and theorizing an artifact or categories of artifacts, a discursive tradition, a particular group of people, a genre, or so on. If the author needs to justify such work to the field, the phrase *the rhetoric of* is an almost-universal warrant. Some of this scholarship is historical, going back to school or social archives, with various sites of women's literacy practice a frequent focus of analysis. Some of it is contemporary, existing in the realm of cultural studies and

cultural criticism. Decades ago, Steve North discussed “the historians” and “the critics” as knowledge-making traditions in composition, tracing their heritage to literature studies. If anything, that tradition has strengthened in recent years. As with literary criticism, its goal is less direct practical application than calling attention to and deepening understanding of Texts (capital T) or practices, providing basic knowledge, often connected to other or related texts and practices. One contribution of composition studies, happening over the past decades through its various arms—rhetorical theory, genre theory, social construction, studies of literacy, histories of education—has been to open a large terrain of text for study, with a spread beyond the field, amplified by cultural studies. A special issue of the *South Atlantic Review* (hardly a composition studies journal) in 2019, for example, will be devoted to everyday writing, under the guest editorship of Kathi Yancey. In terms of more direct studies of writing development, practices, and the experience of instruction, the interpretive turn has contributed to case study having become the dominant mode.

In fact, empirical research featuring quantitative analysis appears infrequently in most journals in my list, and much that does appear reports survey information not, for example, experimental findings. Now, of course, the field has journals dedicated to empirical research: *Written Communication*, *Journal of Writing Research*, the new *Journal of Writing Analytics*, and others. Having journals with different foci is normal and fine. Striking about much of the field’s empirical research, however, are three things. First, a healthy percentage has an international cast, conducted about second language learners or learning, about writing in languages other than English, and/or by scholars from countries other than the United States. Second, much empirical research focuses on school settings, not college settings—except for surveys. Third, empirical quantitative research seems less visibly in the mainstream of the profession than are administrative, practical, programmatic, political, theoretical, and interpretive concerns. I’m continually struck by requests in professional social media (often coming in an emergency) for “hard data” to convince a dean or a committee about a practice or program. Frequently, a reply is to search CompPile, Rich Haswell and Glenn Blalock’s massive database of research in the field, but frequently the studies there are dated. Basic applied empirical research, it seems, is not very sexy to the field’s mainstream—though come crisis, it’s certainly valued.

The gap between the worlds of our scholarship, our practice, and the worlds of others’ practices has, if anything increased over the years. While there remains a Wittgensteinian family resemblance among the journals I’ve included here (with distant patriarch Aristotle perhaps anchoring the gene pool), the fact is that in terms of journal scholarship, the divide between rhetoric and composition is probably increasing, not diminishing. There’s vital work done in rhetorical

criticism, theory, and analysis that might inform classrooms but doesn't really find its justification there. There is similarly basic research in writing practices and discourse features that doesn't much interest the rhetoricians—or even many applied compositionists, who are focused these days on the larger politics of literacy, of writing programs and campus structures (including the demands for adding value and attracting students), the politics of teaching and learning conditions, and the like. Composition itself is divided between those who focus on classrooms and teaching and those who focus on managing and theorizing the enterprise.

The number of journals we now have—interesting journals publishing important and interesting stuff—is impressive. We should be grateful for it. But we should also consider the ways that rich plurality constitutes an unintentional gerrymandering or community gating of composition studies. We might, in fact, anticipate something equivalent to the periodization or genrefication that literary studies has experienced in the academy, especially in larger departments, where nineteenth-century Brit lit folks and twentieth-century Americanists consider teaching in one another's areas as an unfathomable breach of expertise. Specialization may be the sign of a mature discipline, but there was something engaging and exciting about the ad hoc capaciousness of composition studies, the audacity that someone in the field might pay attention to it all.

In 1984, a propitious year, Bob Connors celebrated composition studies as “no longer merely a hobby, or avocation, or punishment,” but he worried that the “subdivisions of composition studies” might render impossible “the fraternity and consubstantiality that have always been the most attractive elements of our field (364–5). I share his worries. I think that's where we've arrived. There are days I long for a sort of *Readers' Digest* of rhetoric and composition studies. (There is, of course, the series *Best of the Journals in Rhetoric and Composition*, published by Parlor Press, focusing on independent journals.) But that's a geezer's nostalgia, I suppose. I must acknowledge that perhaps the dappled neighborhood of journals these days, each a zoning code unto itself, isn't such a bad prospect. Epistemological and topical diversity opens space for different architectures. Moreover, it's possible that longing for consubstantial fraternity proffers the dreams of some self-interested, privileged few, as the gendered second term embodies. Leonard Cohen famously celebrated “the crack in everything” as how the light gets in. If so, our field illuminates itself through many interstices, and we might rather enjoy the resulting light.

In pensive moments, I worry about the future of academic journals because I worry about the future of the academy. Publishing a journal demonstrates faith in continuity, an ongoing act of passing the present forward, confident this issue's articles will bend the field for better, however scantily—and so will the next. All

journals, even ones that end, are born with intimations of immortality, imagining volumes strung beyond the horizon, each editor but a steward. This belief assumes basic stability in the larger academic ecology. But higher education now faces stern challenges. Some of them—demographics and funding—we’ve seen before, but the difference now is an erosion of faith in the whole enterprise, especially as a public good. Suddenly higher education looks fragile. Planning for volumes years hence seems risky, maybe foolish. Still, all disciplines, and surely writing studies, would diminish, even in fragile times, to quit journals and their functions as arbiters, ledgers, and instigators, arcing us forward, issue by issue, all the while showing whence we came.

## NOTES

1. One list I consulted, for example, was Journals in Rhetoric, from Stanford: <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/pwr/teaching/resources-pwr-instructors/journals-rhetoric>.
2. ACE still shows up, ghostly and comic-sansed on websites like <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sg7/ACW/professional.html>.
3. *Precariat* in all its forms may be composition’s Word of the Year.
4. NCTE has subgroups called *conferences*, in the sense of, say “The Big Ten Conference,” and not in the sense of the meeting itself. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) is the largest, Whole Language Umbrella, the smallest, and the Conference of English Leadership and ELATE (formerly the Conference on English Education) in between.
5. *Jforum: A Newsletter of the English Composition Board*, containing a good proportion of WAC-related articles, produced ten issues under Patti Stock’s editorship starting in 1979, sponsored by the University of Michigan’s English Composition Board, growing to a national circulation of around 2000 before its demise.
6. <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/journal/vol22/letter.pdf>.

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