

Review

Journals in Composition Studies

The journals of an academic discipline provide a clear reflection of that discipline's past, a synchronic portrait of its current state, and a glimpse of its dreams and plans for the future. As icons, as loci of disciplinary authority, as editorial soapboxes or coxswain's benches, as steppingstones and milestones, journals figure largely in the life of every professional academician. Some fields rely on their journals mainly for communication of professional knowledge, but in other fields periodicals perform an even more fundamental function. Our discipline, composition studies, was formed by and largely exists through the professional journals in which our work appears. Now changes impend in the journals of our field, changes that will have a profound influence on our disciplinary world. In this essay I will examine where our scholarship originated, how we came to be the sorts of academics we are today, and where our journals may be taking us in the future. Along the way I will examine the major periodicals, both well-established and new, that have created and will continue to shape our field.

The story of many academic disciplines is a story of increasing specialization and fragmentation of interests, and the field that was to evolve around the study and teaching of writing is exemplary in this respect. If we trace articles written about composition and its teaching during the last century, we find them shifting venues in this narrowing pattern: from general magazines to education journals to English journals to level-specific English journals to composition journals and finally to composition journals differentiated by methodology, philosophy, political viewpoint, and level of pedagogic orientation.

In the beginning, articles on "the teaching of English" (which usually meant "acceptable usage") appeared in popular nineteenth-century intellectual weeklies or monthlies like *Harper's*, *Littell's Living Age*, and *Columbian Review*. Before approximately 1870 there was no identifiable "profession" of the modern

Robert J. Connors teaches in the Department of English at Louisiana State University.

College English, Volume 46, Number 4, April 1984

languages going on at most colleges, and except for a few articles on grammar in the very early education journals there was no professional literature. Soon after the Civil War, however, various factors combined to create the “modern” field of education, and journals of education were not long in following. A few articles on composition appeared in *Education* and in the *Proceedings of the NEA* during the 1870s and 1880s, but the field was not well represented in print until the boom years of the 1890s. With the founding of *Educational Review* in 1891 and *School Review* in 1893, the college-based pioneers of the field—Barrett Wendell, James S. Hart, Fred N. Scott—found a congenial forum, and soon articles of all sorts were appearing on composition-related subjects. *PMLA*, the journal of the MLA, carried some pedagogical essays as well until 1903, when the MLA disbanded its pedagogy section and ceased publishing essays on composition.

One indirect result of the MLA’s decision to become an organization exclusively literary was the foundation of the NCTE in 1911.¹ One of the first actions taken by James Hosis and his little band of radical confreres was the establishment of a journal to be the “official publication” of their newly-founded National Council of Teachers of English. Despite doubts on the printer’s part, ten issues of *English Journal* appeared in 1912, and by the end of that year the magazine was paying its own way. In 1939 the first edition of *College English* appeared, and thereafter *English Journal* dealt only with secondary education while *College English* covered college-level issues both of composition and of literature. Only ten years later, in 1949, another group of enthusiasts met in Chicago and formed a special-interest group that wished to concentrate on “communications” courses and the teaching of written expression. Again, establishing a journal was a primary interest of the founders. The first volumes of *College Composition and Communication* contain little except reports of the convention speeches, but by 1960 or so the journal had become an important forum for composition teachers. After 1965 journals were founded apace, both inside and outside of NCTE, to serve a number of special interests. *Research in the Teaching of English* appeared in 1967, *English Education* in 1968. *Freshman English News*, the first non-NCTE composition journal, appeared in 1970, and five more journals were founded in that decade: *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (1974), the *Journal of Basic Writing* (1975), *Teaching Writing* and *Writing Lab Newsletter* (both 1976), and *Writing Program Administration* (1977). Beginning in 1979 there was an intense rush of activity that saw the founding of the *Writing Center Journal*, the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, the *Journal of Teaching Writing*, *The Writing Instructor*, and *Rhetoric Review*. By decades, then, the thirties saw one journal founded, as did the forties. None appeared in the fifties. Two were founded in the sixties, six journals were born in the seventies, and thus far into the eighties we have seen five.²

1. There were more direct factors leading to the need for a pedagogically-oriented organization, most obviously the destructive effect that college entrance examinations were having on secondary-school pedagogy. See J. N. Hook, *A Long Way Together* (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1980), pp. 21-22.

2. I am not here considering journals that are primarily rhetorical in nature, although *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Pre/Text*, and *Rhetoric and Philosophy* have been important to English as well as to speech and philosophy scholars.

Especially in recent years these patterns of journal establishment show a discipline in ferment, going in a number of directions at once as it strives to define itself. Within the general picture, however, we can distinguish more specific reasons for the birth of each of these periodicals, reasons that are practical, or philosophical, or methodological, or political, or even personal. To understand the world our journals have created for us, we must understand why they were founded. Because, rather surprisingly, few journals publish explicit apologies for their establishment, we are here left to make informed surmises.

There is always a mixture of reasons for founding a new journal. Most obviously, journals are founded because some particular group of academics wishes to proclaim and formalize its existence as a discipline. We might call these "manifesto foundations." Thus James Hosis's immediate intention to found a journal as the "official organ" of NCTE almost before the organization had tottered to its feet. Hosis, acutely aware that an ongoing journal was a *sine qua non* of professional respectability for the fledgling organization, was willing to spend his own money if necessary to establish the *English Journal*. Thus also the founding of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1949 and the immediate establishment of *College Composition and Communication*. The composition/communications teachers behind CCC were having no trouble being published by then-available venues, but the creation of their own organ would clearly announce that they were here to stay.

We cannot, of course, discount the necessary element of manifesto in the foundation of every journal. Each one is established to say, "Look at us; see this ritual presentation of our worth; understand that we share our truths thus, and that this artifact is testament to our collective endeavor." Doubtless there are greater and lesser degrees of manifesto: such journals as *Freshman English News*, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, *Writing Center Journal*, *English Education*, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *Writing Program Administration*, and *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* by their very existence argue for the worth of their individual specialties. But the element of manifesto is muted after a specialty has been well established, as all these specialties were.

The "public" message of manifesto, however explicit or muted, is always mixed inescapably with series of less obvious internal messages broadcast to potential readers and contributors by the foundation of a new journal. These internal messages are expressions of the second major reason for establishing new journals, what we might call "developmental foundations." Journals are often founded to encourage an already extant scholarship, distinguishing it from other work by providing new outlets for it. Journals are the *lares et penates* of our professional specialties, the physical evidence that our work exists as a genuine discipline, that our authors and readers are worthy of respect. There is little doubt that such periodicals as *College English*, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, and *English Education* had as many elements of development as of manifesto in their founding; all of their special fields were well established by the time they generated journals, and such developmental foundations signify a desire for disciplinary pride and solidarity as much as they proclaim the "I am!" of manifesto.

Finally, there are journals that are founded for private reasons, journals that neither announce the validity of a new field nor support the development of one heretofore without its distinctive voice. We might call these "expansion foundings," since the main reason for these new periodicals seems to be a feeling that the discipline "needs another journal." This may be because established periodicals are not able to cope with the volume of submissions they receive and authors are becoming discouraged. Or the foundation of an expansion journal may be meant as an editorial challenge to the established values of the discipline, to provide a rival to the established journals. It may just be that some group or individual wants to exercise editorial power and create a center of influence. *CCC*, whose readers were already being served by *College English*, began as an expansion journal as well as a manifesto, and the last few years have seen a number of expansion journals in composition: *Teaching Writing*, *Journal of Teaching Writing*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *The Writing Instructor*. All of these journals cover areas that are covered elsewhere, and for the time being they are the outsiders, each one struggling to define itself, find a readership and a community of supporting authors, create a name as a valuable forum.

These, then, are the reasons journals are founded. Once they are come into being, however, what functions do journals serve for the disciplinary community they represent? The most obvious answer, the "public" answer, is that journals exist to keep their readers current with the best work being done in the field, to share the findings of practitioners. Most of us read our *CE*, our *CCC*, our *Freshman English News*, etc. to stay in touch with our colleagues' latest ideas, to stay abreast of the profession. Since in any vital intellectual discipline concepts are constantly being revised, tested, and superseded, field journals are the instruments by which ideas are shared and this process of improvement goes on.

This public function of journals is, of course, an extremely important one, but it is not, as all academics know, their only or even their most important function. That primacy should probably be given to the function of field journals as "filters," defining what sorts of work are acceptable and unacceptable to the discipline, creating implicit criteria for work to be done in the future, wielding institutional authority to create, at least to some degree, intellectual authority. The role of journals as disciplinary filters is not without problems, since those whose work is filtered out will always be dissatisfied. But the growing selectivity that composition journals have shown in the past fifteen years does indicate that a more rigorous standard is being applied to the field. This in turn forces harder work and higher content-quality in articles submitted. Getting published in a major journal has never been harder than it is today, and those who write in composition studies have both cursed this growing difficulty and been improved by it.³

3. See, for instance, Edward P. J. Corbett, "Editor's Farewell," *CCC*, 30 (1979), 349-350, and Donald Gray, "Another Year with College English," *CE*, 44 (1982), 385-389. Corbett reports that during his tenure as *CCC* editor he accepted between 7% and 9% of articles submitted, and Gray reports that in 1981 he accepted 7.6% of composition articles submitted to *CE*. Expansion journals have eased the flow of submissions, but the standards of the major journals have never been stiffer.

This “filter” function of composition journals brings up the inescapable question of where intellectual authority in a field really lies. To a considerable—some would say an alarming—degree, it lies with the editors and the editorial boards of the major journals. Here we must make a sharp distinction between institutional authority and intellectual authority. Journal editors possess the former and play a large role in creating the latter. Editors of journals, especially major journals like *College Composition and Communication* and *College English*, act in their own persons as “gates,” determining what sorts of scholarship will be accredited, deemed permissible. The selective perpetuation of new ideas that is carried on by these wielders of institutional power has an immense effect on what constitutes the body of knowledge defining the discipline itself.⁴ Editors are not, of course, completely free of constraint; they cannot publicly exclude work that has intrinsic or obvious claim to intellectual authority, nor can they easily exclude work by acknowledged scholars in the discipline. Within these limitations, however, editors can apply a huge discretionary power, which is one reason that institutional selection of a journal editor is taken much more seriously than the annual selection of officers. When an essay appears in a major field journal, it carries with it a weight of considerable authority.

Because of their roles as filters of community opinion, journals are the essential vehicles for redistribution of authority—both institutional and intellectual—in a field. Those who are often published, reviewed, and cited may advance from obscurity to eminence in a field with startling rapidity; similarly, groups with distinct political, philosophical, or methodological claims can be aided or nearly silenced by the decisions of journal editors. Inability to find a satisfactory forum in established journals sometimes forces such groups to set up rival centers of power and rival journals through which to express themselves. Eventually these rival journals may become loci of institutional authority themselves, but for the immediate future they will be outsiders. The power within the established institution will meanwhile tend to flow to those members and authors who “play the game” the way the journal shows it should be played. They will be published; their names will become known; they will gain institutional authority and perhaps eventually a place on the editorial board or the editorship itself.⁵

Much less needs to be said about the other central function of field journals: that of acting as scoreboards and status indicators for disciplinary authors. Publications in journals of different levels of fame and status earn different amounts of respect, leading to the universal habit of judging academics by their ability to “make it into” their major journals. Irvin Hashimoto has graphically analyzed part of this phenomenon in his brilliant “Toward a Taxonomy of Scholarly Publications” (*CE*, 45 [1983], 500-505). But as important as the kinds of scholarly publications one has is *where* they appeared. If different kinds of publications

4. The following discussion of journals as disciplinary filters is based on Stephen Toulmin's discussion of scientific disciplines in *Human Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 270-275.

5. As an interesting illustration of such editorial discretion at work and its meaning for the author, see the long footnote at the beginning of James Sledd, “In Defense of the *Student's Right*,” *College English*, 45 (1983), 667-668n.

(essays, notes, review-essays) can be analogized to the different ships in a fleet, as Hashimoto has done, then the periodicals themselves might be compared to poker hands: "I was bluffing. Pair of reviews in *CEA Critic*." "Read 'em and weep. Three 'Staffroom Interchanges' in *CCC* and a lead article in *WPA*." "You're both losers. I've got an *FEN*, a *CE*, a *CCC*, a lit survey in *RTE*, and . . . a *PMLA*!" (muffled gasps).

The ability of field journals to filter opinions and create status makes them powerful institutions indeed. In composition studies, journals have come in the past twenty years to be *the* most powerful institutions; they seem to have at this time surpassed their predecessors and historical rivals, textbooks, for the position of primary influence. In the future, one would hope, we will come closer still to the situation of more advanced humanities disciplines, and journals will define the ongoing research while textbooks act as conservators of proven theory used to train students rather than as oppositional strongholds of disproven dogma.

With these facts in mind, let us shift down a gear and look more closely at the individual journals that define us as professionals. (I list in an appendix the titles and addresses of the journals I will discuss in this survey.)

The two that stand out immediately, of course, are the two general NCTE journals, *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*. The older sibling, *College English*, serves the entire College Section of NCTE, a much larger audience than that of *College Composition and Communication*. As a result of this more varied readership, *CE* is a far more general periodical than *CCC*. *CE* publishes essays on all topics concerning teaching English in college, both literature and composition. (*CE* has traditionally published more essays concerned with writing than with literature, but it may be that this imbalance is unavoidable since the study of the pedagogy of composition is a more vital field than that of the pedagogy of literature.) Published eight times yearly, *College English* is probably the most enjoyable of all the composition journals to read, partly because of the general interest of most of its articles, but also because of an editorial willingness to publish strongly polemical essays and controversial opinions as well as poetry, graphics, and humor. *CE* is, indeed, as close to a general-circulation magazine as a professional journal can be and remain respectable. The essay, to *CE*, is still an art form, and interchanges of opinion between teachers are as important as tables of research results. In other words, *CE* still places English studies squarely in the humanities tradition of knowledge gained through reasoned discourse. It does not publish essays on techniques, skills, or pedagogical practices divorced from larger issues and meanings. It takes on issues of method, politics, philosophy, and classroom practice in a juridical continuum, attempting to offer something that will appeal to all members of the profession. *CE* also takes on the important but rarely considered job of formalizing the "tacit knowledge" of the profession by commissioning review articles (like this one) which bring together in easily accessible form much disparate but useful information.

Though *College English* is the most widely read journal in the field of com-

position studies, it must relinquish the title of “most essential field journal” to *College Composition and Communication*. Though it is read by fewer than half the audience of *CE* (only CCC members get it), “Three C’s” still exerts tremendous influence. *CCC* is the central venue of serious composition specialists, the one journal read by everyone in the field. It publishes a wide range of articles, from theoretical and philosophical essays to research reports, and it is not hyperbolic to say that over 70% of the most important composition research over the past two decades has appeared in *CCC*. In addition to full-length articles, *CCC* has several unique features: a “Staffroom Interchange” section, which prints shorter pieces with a more practical, pedagogical slant, and a book review section in each issue, which covers recent professional books and textbooks. *CCC* is a very desirable venue, and as such it has for years been very difficult to “get into.” Unlike *CE*, which has eight issues each year, *CCC* is a quarterly, and the journal can quite literally not keep up with the rising tide of scholarship in the field. *CCC*’s inability to publish more than a fraction of submitted manuscripts has led to the foundation of many of the more recent general-composition periodicals I will discuss below.

In contrast with *CE*, which has maintained a remarkably consistent editorial voice during the past two decades, *CCC* has gone through some fairly obvious changes in tone. What we might call the “modern era” of *CCC* began in 1965, when William Irmscher took over as editor. During Irmscher’s long tenure, 1965-1973, the journal cast off the last of its older character as a sort of newsletter-cum-conference-reporter and assumed the stature it maintains today as a central field journal. The editorship of Edward P. J. Corbett (1974-1979) continued this trend, shifting the journal’s emphasis slightly toward practical pedagogy. Richard L. Larson, editor since 1980, has moved *CCC* into a strongly theoretical mode. These trends are illustrated by a comparison of numbers of articles and average page lengths during the three editorships:

1969 (editor: Irmscher)	
Theory/practice articles: 31	Average length: 6.03 pp.
Staffroom Interchange pieces: 9	3.44 pp.
Book Reviews: 10	2.90 pp.
1977 (editor: Corbett)	
Theory/practice articles: 43	Average length: 4.74 pp.
Staffroom Interchange pieces: 23	1.83 pp.
Book Reviews: 27	1.44 pp.
1981 (editor: Larson)	
Theory/practice articles: 28	Average length: 10.85 pp.
Staffroom Interchange pieces: 5	2.20 pp.
Book Reviews: 23	1.56 pp.

As these figures show, the difference between Irmscher and Corbett lies mainly in the increased stress that Corbett gave to Staffroom Interchange and to a larger number of shorter book reviews and the resultant decrease in the length of main

articles. Larson, as we can see, has taken the journal in a different direction, away from the brief, practical informality of Staffroom Interchange and toward longer theoretical articles. Corbett had sought to move *CCC* in the direction of *College English* with poetry, short humor pieces, even occasional graphics. Larson has done away with such touches, changing as well the typography and layout, even jettisoning the traditional colorful covers of the journal. *CCC* now exists as a journal of obvious seriousness.

The third NCTE journal, *Research in the Teaching of English*, is read by fewer than one-half of the readership of *CCC*, yet in its own way it is even more influential. The journal was established by Richard Braddock in 1967 as a forum for the serious and carefully-executed empirical research which Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer had found so notably absent in the field of English when they published *Research in Written Composition* in 1963 (Urbana, Ill.: NCTE). At first *RTE* appeared only twice yearly, and during the journal's early years, strictly experimental articles were less common than case studies, quasi-experimental research, reviews of research, and other sorts of studies that, while more rigorous than the "here's what I think" essays of other composition journals, still lacked the methodological purity of social-science research. But times were changing. In 1973 *RTE* went to three issues yearly, and in 1978 to quarterly status as the number of serious researchers grew. The journal had begun by requiring the MLA citation form, but in 1973 Alan Purves, who had just been named editor, declared that hence-forward *RTE* would use the more scientific APA citation form. It was an important declaration of allegiance; with that seemingly small change Purves announced that *RTE* was moving fully into the orbit of social-science research and away from the humanities tradition implied by the MLA style.

Indeed, the history of *RTE* has been one of ever-increasing methodological rigor. Since the time of Braddock's editorship the use of experimental method has risen until now the majority of *RTE* essays are experimental or descriptive reports. The use of statistical tables to provide the essential information has risen concurrently; in the 1969 volume *RTE* published an average of 2.65 tables per article, while in 1982 that number had risen to 4.70. Similarly, the form of *RTE* articles has gradually sifted down to a relatively standardized version of the classical social-science experimental report: problem, literature survey, method, findings (statistical tables), discussion, conclusions. The journal covers the entire spectrum of concerns from elementary through adult age groups, utilizing such common research forms as the survey, case study, intensive descriptive study, pre-test/post-test experiment, quasi-experiment. Authors for *RTE* have studied texts, classroom layout, different sorts of class makeup, research methodologies, different pedagogical techniques, and, more recently, language-based behavior in the non-academic world. The research on speaking, reading, and writing published in *Research in the Teaching of English* is not always easily applicable to pedagogical concerns, but a great deal of it does have practical uses.

For a journal that champions objectivity, *RTE* itself provokes strong feelings. It is often condemned—even by those who support it most passionately—as being a bit dull, a bit mechanical, a bit overformalized. *RTE* is indeed a far cry

from the general-interest essays of *CE* and even from the rhetorical seriousness of *CCC*.⁶ It is not difficult to find evidence for charges that many articles in *Research in the Teaching of English* are toneless and arhetorical, that the journal gives allegiance to an experimental tradition plagued by philosophical and practical questions. And yet, for all these complaints, *RTE* is publishing information crucial to the discipline. The critiques of Braddock and his co-authors in 1963 still hold true today: most discourse in composition studies still takes place on a level of opinion and assertion. *RTE* is a valuable journal because it simply has no truck with unsupported assertion. It wants the facts, ma'am, insofar as they can be ascertained by experimental methods, and if these methods are not perfect, they are at least defensible on a rational basis. If we complain that *RTE* is over-formalized, we must also realize that to some extent it was driven to those extremes of rigor by the stubborn unwillingness of traditional composition scholarship to subject its theses to careful testing.

English Education is another specialized quarterly from NCTE, this one the organ of the Conference on English Education. Founded a year after *RTE*, *English Education* is in many ways more a product of the revitalized progressive education movement of the early and middle 60s than of the "rhetorical renaissance" that revitalized the study of composition during that same period. As its title suggests, *English Education* is not really a "composition" journal. It is aimed specifically at those who specialize in training teachers of English, and this is an even smaller group than the *RTE* readership; surveys also show that it is a surprisingly diverse group. Most readers of *EE*, however, are English Education faculty members, and thus the articles in the journal tend to be either at a general "teaching older students" level or aimed specifically at questions of training high-school teachers.

Most of the articles published by *EE* are of two rather distinct kinds: either they are discussions of the past, present, or future state of English and English Ed in America, or they are essays on translating research and theory into practice. Much of the attention in *EE* is directed within its own domain, concerned with what English Ed "should be" or where it "should go." *EE* does publish research, but rarely; its audience is obviously more interested in essays that will help them teach teachers and in opining about the state of the art. As a result *EE* often retains the flavor of the "old" (pre-1960) NCTE journals more clearly than any other current NCTE publication. It is obviously involved in tacit argumentation for the worth and reality of the field it covers, and concerns about that field still fill its pages.

Leaving behind the 1960s, we also must leave behind the NCTE, which has sponsored no new journals since 1968. From here on the field belongs to the independents, a hardy band of enthusiasts who were willing to go to the time and expense necessary to found and run independent academic periodicals. The

6. Reminding one of the old saying that you exhibit your numbers in *Research in the Teaching of English*, state your conclusions in *College Composition and Communication*, and argue for your approach in *College English*.

greatfather of independent composition journals is *Freshman English News*, founded on a shoestring in 1970 by Gary Tate, who continued to edit it until 1981. Throughout most of its history *FEN* has been known to the cognoscenti as a journal second only (and sometimes not even second) to *CCC* in the quality of the essays it published. *FEN* is ostensibly a newsletter, and its tabloid format, coverless and spartan, might give an unwary reader the impression that it will be filled with short, chatty pieces about how teachers should correct student essays in green rather than red ink. Throughout most of its history it has had a hard time gaining a place in academic libraries because of its unprepossessing appearance and extremely low subscription price (\$2.00/yr. until very recently—when it rose to \$3.00/yr.), and thus it has had to depend on individual subscribers. Though inexpensive to print, the newsletter format has been a problem. *FEN* simply *looks* uninspired.

In truth, however, this drab little paper is as far as a journal can be from the phatic communion of typical newsletters. Tate set a high standard of editorial criticism from the beginning, and *FEN* has typically run long articles of the utmost seriousness as well as the helpful shorter pieces that were solicited by the masthead. It was *the* outlet throughout the 70s for essays that were longer than *CCC* or *CE* liked to print, or which were too radical in outlook for the mainstream journals. Such lengthy and important essays as Winston Weather's "Grammars of Style," Richard Coe's "Rhetoric 2001," and John Warnock's "New Rhetoric and the Grammar of Pedagogy" could not easily have been published elsewhere, and *FEN* did the profession a great service in providing an outlet for them.

More recently, *FEN* has seen some change. It has widened its official editorial policy to solicit "any articles in the humanistic tradition of the study of writing or the teaching of writing," and no longer places any restriction on length. The position of sole alternative venue that the old *FEN* held in relation to the NCTE journals has been invaded by newer independents. A new editor has taken over, giving Gary Tate a well-deserved rest, and the character—perhaps the continued existence—of the new *FEN* will be determined over the next few years. Its long-time fans continue to hope it will weather these changes as it has others.

If the 1960s were a period of expansion in the field, the 70s might usefully be seen as a period of specialization. The academic field of composition studies had been established, and suddenly it began to occur to various groups that their special interests deserved enshrinement in specialized literature. The first group to seek this sort of dedicated forum was, not surprisingly, junior-college teachers. The junior-college movement had been growing since the early 1960s, and by 1970 there were over 800 two-year colleges in America (today there are 1148). The needs of the teachers of English in these schools were specialized and pressing; junior-college teachers knew all about the problems of Basic Writers long before the CUNY experiment with open admissions. No then-current journal seemed to fulfill the needs of these two-year college teachers, who were interested far less in theory than in pedagogy and who needed a journal more as proof of existence and declaration of solidarity than as a research outlet. Out of this need *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* was born in 1974.

Teaching English in the Two-Year College, a tri-quarterly, has little pretense to academicism, presenting itself honestly for what it is: an organ of communication for the dedicated and often grossly overworked junior-college English teacher. With few exceptions its articles avoid high-flown philosophizing and heavy-duty theory; most of them are descriptions of what individual teachers have found good. Pedagogic techniques of all sorts abound, most of them written with an emphasis on “here’s how to do this” (as opposed to *English Education’s* emphasis on “here’s how to get them to do this”). The general tone of *TETYC* is supportive, generous, personal—very different from the serious, “rational” tone of more rigorously scholarly journals. Each issue of *TETYC* starts off, for instance, with three or four pages of “Professional News, Notes, and Announcements,” letting the readers know about upcoming conferences, new organizations and journals, calls for papers, etc.—an invaluable bulletin board for readers. The journal also carries textbook reviews, a rare and increasingly valuable service in the current world of composition studies.

In sum, what *TETYC* doesn’t do is compensated for by what it does. As an academic journal it is frankly second-rate—but it does not seek the sort of rigor that *CCC* and *FEN* do. Some *TETYC* articles may be, of course, pieces that have been rejected by the more prestigious journals, but others were obviously written specifically with two-year teaching in mind and with *TETYC* as their proper home. The final criterion to apply when judging a journal like *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* is not whether it can match *CCC*, but whether it serves its chosen audience well. I think it does—better, in certain ways, than some more prestigious journals serve their readers. There is, no doubt, a temptation for *TETYC* editors to want to move the journal “upmarket”—publish more research, more theory, etc. But as it is, *TETYC* gives most of its readers what they want: a private forum, helpful advice, easy access to publication. It does the job it was designed to do.

Another growing special field generated its own journal in 1975, when the pioneering teachers of Basic Writing at the City University of New York—led by Mina Shaughnessy—determined to turn their unofficial exchanges of papers on Basic Writing pedagogy into a more widely circulated journal. Since 1975 the *Journal of Basic Writing* has published eleven issues and has almost completed its third volume.⁷ From the beginning, when the editorial staff saw the journal as a forum for helping to define the essential issues of Basic Writing pedagogy, each issue of *JBW* has been centered around a theme—“Error,” “Courses,” “Uses of Grammar,” “Reinforcement.” The current staff of *JBW* keeps up that practice today, although the taxonomic categories of early issues have been replaced by more general themes such as “Basic Writing and Social Science Research” and “Training Teachers.”

7. The publication schedule of the *Journal of Basic Writing* in the past has been erratic, but the journal is definitely alive and well. Because of publication problems the journal got behind on its cover dates; thus, as this is written in late 1983, the most recent issue is Vol. 3, #3, Fall/Winter 1981. The editors have recently moved to computerized typesetting and hope soon to catch the cover date up to present. Do not, as I did, take the fact that the last issue you can find is dated 1981 as evidence that the *Journal of Basic Writing* is defunct.

Basic Writing is a field that is especially in need of an informing journal, given as it has historically been to superstition and prejudice of the most destructive sorts. *JBW* does yeoman duty in this regard, carrying forward the work of pedagogical enlightenment begun at CUNY in the early 1970s and made famous by Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*. Of all the fields of pedagogy covered by composition studies, Basic Writing remains the least understood and, usually, the least respected. It is never out of danger of lapsing back into "bonehead English," taught by draftees, ignored by scholars, subsisting in a benighted theory-vacuum. *JBW* militates against such a decline, and as such does necessary work. Published twice yearly, in Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter issues, the journal has always been independently-minded. While adhering to no "party line" on issues of pedagogy, *JBW* consistently publishes the best essays found anywhere on these problems, and it regularly attracts articles from the leading scholars in the field. Since each issue is centered around a previously chosen theme, some essays are commissioned by the editors, but large numbers of *JBW* essays come in "over the transom."⁸

The increasing specialization of the field was becoming ever more apparent by the middle 70s. In 1976 and 1977 two new publications were launched to serve new constituencies: *The Writing Lab Newsletter* and the *Writing Program Administration Newsletter*. As Lisa Ede has pointed out to me, most of the content of newsletters is phatic communication, a sort of "Hey, I'm out here too and we're all facing the same kinds of problems" halloo from some colleague previously unknown. *The Writing Lab Newsletter* illustrates this, remaining today what it has been since its inception—a classic and admirably useful newsletter without pretense to scholarly importance. Produced at the Writing Lab at Purdue University, each of its ten yearly issues is inexpensively printed on colorful 8½" × 11" paper and stapled together at the corner like a departmental handout; each has ten closely-typed pages. *WLN* publishes few long essays and few essays concentrating on theory, specializing instead in practical articles describing ways in which writing labs can be run and improved. Practical help and hand-holding are the important contents. The newsletter's readership writes in almost like a mutual-aid club, describing their programs with modest pride, suggesting ways to go about organizing, improving, and evaluating lab programs, providing answers to the always pressing question of funding. *WLN* acts like a bulletin-board for writing lab administrators, keeping them in touch, announcing who's had a baby or lost a relative, offering help at home and handy-dandy tips. Though *WLN* remains a very specialized publication, useful only to writing lab administrators and tutors, it serves its special purpose well. It is, in addition, the most personalized and informal of all the journals covered here, strongly imbued with the character of its editor, Muriel Harris. It is the only writing journal that makes its readers feel like friends.

Unlike *WLN*, the *Writing Program Administration Newsletter*, started in 1977

8. For those interested in contributing to future issues, upcoming theme issues include "Academic and Non-Academic Writing," "Computer-Assisted Instruction," "Basic Writers in ESL," and "The State of the Art."

by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, did not remain a newsletter for long. WPAs are usually teachers as well as administrators, and most are theorists and writers as well as teachers. Within two years the *WPA Newsletter's* folksy and newsy tone had been traded in on one much more like that of a traditional composition journal. In 1978 the *Newsletter* became a refereed journal overseen by an advisory board, publishing longer essays on both theoretical and practical issues of importance to the community of administrators. The editors determined to use the newly rigorous journal not merely to keep in touch with other administrators, but to define and improve an area of composition that was coming to be extremely important.

The new dispensation at WPA was formalized in 1979, when the *Newsletter* was officially changed to full journal status as *WPA, Writing Program Administration*. A relatively small journal appearing three times a year, *WPA* is aimed specifically at the problems facing administrators rather than those of teachers or students. It is less likely to publish essays on writing research or better teaching techniques than it is to print debates on such administrative questions as staffing, organization, hiring, testing, and program development. Many of the *WPA* articles are openly polemical, taking stands for or against certain policies, and although the subjects are specialized, the by-lines are very often familiar to readers of more general journals. Since most WPAs are also contributing scholars, *WPA* offers a unique perspective on the field. Here is where our favorite research and theory authors—Ellen Nold, Wayne Booth, Andrea Lunsford, Erika Lindemann—speak to each other on a practical and argumentative level about the administrative problems they all face. Publication in *WPA* is not a goal for all, but the journal is nearly always worth reading for the insights it gives into the complex problems of implementing our growing knowledge in useful ways.

Two more specialized journals appeared in 1980: the *Writing Center Journal* and the *Journal of Advanced Composition*. It is rather early to make sweeping judgments about the quality and purpose of these journals, but a few things can be noted. At first look one might think both journals redundant, since presumably both constituencies were already being served: lab people by *WLN*, and advanced-composition teachers by *CE*, *CCC*, and the general journals, which seldom draw rigorous lines between “freshman” teaching and other instruction in writing. The editors of the *Writing Center Journal* took up this question of purpose in a preface to the first issue, proposing that since writing centers were on the “frontier” of the discipline with their concern for student-centered and process-based pedagogies, those who ran them deserved a theory journal. The *Writing Center Journal*, they claimed, would complement the *Writing Lab Newsletter* as “a sort of bi-annual reunion to go along with the *Newsletter's* monthly gathering of the writing center family.”

This statement was followed by an admission by the editors that they weren't really sure what sorts of articles to expect from their readership. To some degree the *WCJ* readership wasn't sure either, and the journal was forced to reiterate its call for papers in the second issue. Again, in the Fall/Winter 1982 issue, the editors were forced to all but plead for manuscript submissions; they simply were not getting enough good essays. Part of the problem may be the considerable

overlap between *WCJ* and *WLN*; indeed, the main difference between the two journals has often tended to be length of articles and density of footnote apparatus. It may be that despite the fact that writing labs are on a pedagogical frontier, the pressing nature of the problems they deal with interferes with pure-theory research and scholarship. *WLN* may be covering the field to the satisfaction of the writing lab constituency; many of them feel, it seems, more comfortable contributing to an unpretentious newsletter than to a full-scale journal. Although *WCJ* has published a number of fine essays, it still seems to be seeking the voices for which it was designed as an outlet. Wishing to transcend the *kaffeeklatsch* familiarity of the *Newsletter*, *WCJ* has not yet found a method of doing so that is congenial to its potential community of authors, and one suspects that until the background and professional status of the average writing center administrator and teacher changes, the problem will continue. *WCJ* may be a case, as Stephen Toulmin suggests can happen in the sciences, in which the foundation of a periodical has run ahead of genuine disciplinary needs.

The Journal of Advanced Composition presents another problematical situation. Its proposed constituency certainly exists, but relatively few teachers or writers define themselves *primarily* as teachers of advanced composition. The Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition as a special-field interest group does not seem to have the cohesiveness of technical writing teachers or even basic writing teachers. As a result the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, although it seeks articles relating to the teaching and theory of advanced composition, often reads like a general composition journal—and unfortunately, not always a first-rate one. Published twice yearly, the *JAC* got off to rather a rocky start, and its first two volumes, while containing a number of well-written essays, also contained a number of articles that gave the impression of having been turned down by *CCC* or *CE* and sent to the *JAC* as a sort of periodical orphanage. The “name” authors published by the *JAC* in those early volumes did not appear to be sending their more important pieces, and of the lesser-known authors only a few provided outstanding essays. More recently, the journal seems to be finding better material. It has the potential to be a useful journal if it can find a genuine constituency; its publication of book reviews is a needed service, and its wide range of interests make it a natural outlet for both theoretical and practical essays. Ultimately the fate of *JAC* is in the hands of the community of authors. If they support it, it will prosper; if not, it will continue at a level of mediocrity.

This question of what we might call journal patronage brings us to the last and most recent group of periodicals I will discuss: the “expansion journals,” general-composition periodicals that serve as alternative venues to the older and more established NCTE magazines. Some of these have theoretical biases and some do not; all are relatively new and still seeking their final definitions. In this group I place *Teaching Writing* (1976), *The Writing Instructor* (1981), the *Journal of Teaching Writing* (1982), and *Rhetoric Review* (1982).

Of these four journals, *Teaching Writing* is the oldest, and its current editorial policies set it apart from the others as well. These policies have recently

changed; from 1976 through 1981, *Teaching Writing* was a small-scale, typed-format journal of general composition that had been born in a graduate composition course at the University of Delaware. It seldom reached national circulation, usually remaining within a relatively small circle around Delaware, and its inability to attract large numbers of submissions meant that it appeared only once a year. All in all, a paradigmatic well-meaning but small-time operation. In 1982, however, editor George Miller determined to change his journal's policy in order to make *TW* into something more useful. In that year, instead of the usual melange of articles, *TW* published solicited essays by teachers describing what was taught in graduate courses in composition at a number of different universities. Rather than a journal, *Teaching Writing* had become a sort of yearly descriptive report to the profession on some one important element of the teaching of writing. The 1983 *TW* will report on graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, and the 1984 issue will cover CAI applications. In deciding no longer to pursue the usual goals of traditional general-coverage journals, *Teaching Writing* has freed itself to offer more specific—and probably more useful—services to the profession.

The Writing Instructor, begun in 1981, is a quarterly journal published by a group of practitioners associated with the vital Freshman Writing Program at the University of Southern California. Evaluation of this and other journals fewer than four years old must necessarily be tentative, but the primary impression given by *TWI* is one of involvement and enthusiasm. The editorial staff is young, and *TWI* is a youthful-sounding journal, with both the negative and positive implications of that term. On the negative side, *TWI* started off with a rather narrow demand for pedagogically-based submissions, thinking, perhaps, to offset the seeming move of *CCC* away from practical essays on teaching. This potentially constraining submissions policy, though still on the masthead, seems to have been transcended in practice, since *The Writing Instructor* is now publishing some fine articles with only tangential relation to "how-to" pedagogy. Youthful enthusiasm also showed in the selections of certain essays in early issues; not all articles were as solid as one might have wished.

Youthfulness can also be a positive element in a journal, however, and the informed enthusiasm that comes through in *TWI* makes the journal very appealing. USC is an important intellectual center for composition studies, and the entire Los Angeles area is home to many valuable resource people. *TWI* draws on a pool of local talent bigger perhaps than any other in the country, and this helps make possible the unique format it uses of printing an essay alongside immediate responses to it from other scholars and teachers. The give-and-take of such an opinion/response format often makes *TWI* seem more a dialogue than a lecture, part of the journal's charm. *TWI* is drawing more and more quality submissions as word-of-mouth advertising makes it known, and one can almost see the quality of each issue rise. The emphasis is still on teaching techniques, exercises, etc., but *TWI* has also printed theoretical pieces, review-essays, book reviews—indeed, almost any quality work relating to composition.

The Journal of Teaching Writing, which appeared for the first time in spring of 1982, is probably the most expensively-produced journal covered by this essay:

large, beautifully printed, and carefully designed, with an inviting format that makes it easy to read. More importantly, *JTW* has published a number of fine articles by well-known scholars and by lesser-known but promising authors as well. It covers both theory and practice, includes useful book reviews, is very capably edited, and would seem to have a bright future. And yet, the *Journal of Teaching Writing* evidences a strangely divided personality. Published twice yearly by the Indiana Teachers of Writing, *JTW* exists in a state between two worlds of academic publication—the regional and the national. Like *The Writing Instructor*, it has the advantage of being located in a state with a great deal of activity in composition, but unlike the California journal, *JTW* still depends for most of its readership on the state where it is located. Not all *JTW* subscribers are Hoosiers, but the majority are members of Indiana Teachers of Writing who receive the journal as part of their membership, and thus *JTW* has only begun to attract the national readership it obviously is interested in.

Its affiliation with Indiana Teachers of Writing presents the journal with another crux, since the organization exists to serve teachers at all levels, from elementary through college. Thus a large number of *JTW*'s readers are elementary and secondary teachers, people who are interested in pragmatic classroom techniques and in applications of ideas in their own schools. Most of the submissions to the journal, however, come from college-level authors who wish to address the problems of college writers and who are speaking to an audience of their peers. Ron Strahl, the editor of *JTW*, is thus forced to decide whether to try to serve his whole constituency by soliciting more elementary- and secondary-level articles or to publish the good college-level material that comes his way most frequently. Along with the question of regional-national emergence, this question of the level to which *JTW* is addressed needs to be answered before the journal can define itself clearly.

The most recently founded journal, the twice-yearly *Rhetoric Review*, is in some ways an impressive journal, largely because of the almost immediate support it has received from the community of well-established academic authors. A continuing problem for some newer journals is lack of quality submissions; many authors want, it seems, to appear in *CCC* or nowhere, and this dearth of good manuscripts has meant trouble for infant journals. *Rhetoric Review*, however, has had the support of authors from the beginning. It is not, of course, unusual for newer journals to solicit or publish essays by "name" scholars—but, as we all have seen, such authors often submit their secondary or occasional pieces to newer journals, saving their major statements for established organs. *RR* has attracted major essays from such authors as Edward P. J. Corbett, Joseph Comprone, Walker Gibson, Maxine Hairston, John Warnock, Jim Corder, and many others—all in its first two years of publication.

Editor Theresa Enos from the beginning made *RR* a truly general journal, not limited by any sort of specialization from publishing good material. She also realized that if *RR* was to attract subscriptions, library adoptions, and superior submissions, it would have to have a professional-looking format; the fate of the transient-appearing *Freshman English News* taught that lesson. So *Rhetoric Review* is a well-turned-out journal, with size, graphics, printing, and general

appearance all of good quality. *RR* is not produced on the cheap, and authors, egotists that they must be, notice such small touches. By careful soliciting and direct-mail announcements, *RR* attracted enough quality articles for its first three issues that a tone was set, and it now seems possible that *Rhetoric Review* may go on to compete with *Freshman English News* for the status of primary non-NCTE composition journal.

This Cook's Tour of our current journal situation does not show clearly the underlying factors that are continuing to shape our journals and our profession, but it may begin to suggest how strong is the ferment in our field. The discipline of composition studies is in a transitional period right now, and our periodical literature mirrors both our solidarity and our divisions. For many years the field had few journals, and they contained a discouragingly large percentage of unsupported assertion, opinionizing of every sort, naive advice, self-righteous homilies. Only in the past two decades have we begun to develop a scholarly literature that really deserves that name, and even since 1963 we have been prey to the worst sorts of throwbacks to the Bad Old Days. As a field we have until recently been utterly gullible, willing to swallow the veriest tripe with a smile and a nod. What can only be called a disciplinary inferiority complex led us to accept almost any half-baked assertion that an author could back up with some sort of reference to "scientific" language study. We have for too long been the sweet-natured village idiot of college disciplines, gaping at linguistically-based sleight of hand, moved to tears by humanist histrionics, pathetically grateful to anyone in a "real" discipline who would deign to suggest an analogy to our field.

All of this has been changing, slowly, over the past few years. As our journals have become more specialized, more sophisticated, our discipline has become tougher, more demanding, more intellectually respectable. We need be defensive no more about the quality of scholars we attract or the worth of the scholarship they generate. Composition studies has grown up quickly—but no gains are made without losses. If our journals are more impressive, they are less entertaining and more rarefied. If our discipline is more mature, we pay a price in a loss of the solidarity of earlier years. If our scholarship is more sophisticated and specialized, we pay a price in the growing fragmentation of interests dividing us; as short a time ago as ten years, a hard-working generalist could practically command the entire field, and today, as the array of journals and their purposes I have surveyed suggests, that would be impossible for anyone. If we have begun to exchange the credulous pluralism of our earlier years for a more critical perspective, we pay a price in the threat to the geniality and fellowship that have always marked professional relations in composition studies.

Like it or not, however, we are launched. Composition studies is a genuine discipline, no longer merely a hobby, or avocation, or punishment, and through our scholarly contributions to journals we can direct this fledgling discipline in a number of directions. There is no doubt that the era of specialization is here to stay; we now know that our task of better understanding writing and the teaching of writing is so complex that it will not yield to the simple solutions of past theory. Within the necessary subdivisions of composition studies, however, we can still strive to maintain the fraternity and consubstantiality that have always

been the most attractive elements of our field. It would seem a shame to exchange the amiable credulity of our discipline's youth only for the Passchendaele criticality of "mature" humanities fields like literary theory. Before all else, if we are to be true to our best heritage as rhetoricians, we must strive to maintain communication with each other: never to dismiss, never to despair of, never to despise any other serious practitioner must be the goals embodied by our scholarship. We are the oldest and the newest of the humanities, and it is up to us to use the lessons of our past to vision forth for the future the best that scholarship can be.

Appendix

- College English. Donald Gray, Department of English, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Subscriptions and advertisements: NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801
- College Composition and Communication. Richard L. Larson, 30 Greenridge Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605. Subscriptions and advertisements: NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801
- Research in the Teaching of English. Arthur Applebee, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305; Judith Langer, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. Subscriptions and advertisements: NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801
- English Education. Allen Berger, Forbes Quadrangle, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Subscriptions and advertisements: NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801
- Freshman English News. Robert Mayberry, Department of English, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX 76129
- Teaching English in the Two-Year College. Bertie E. Fearing, Department of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834
- Journal of Basic Writing. Sarah D'Eloia Fortune, Instructional Resource Center, City University of New York, 535 East 80th Street, New York, NY 10021
- The Writing Lab Newsletter. Muriel Harris, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907
- Writing Program Administration. William E. Smith, Department of English, Utah State University, Logan, Utah 84322. Subscriptions: Joseph Comprone, Department of English, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40208
- Writing Center Journal. Lil Brannon, The Expository Writing Program, New York University, 269 Mercer St., New York, NY 10003
- Journal of Advanced Composition. Tim D. P. Lally, Department of English, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688
- Teaching Writing. George Miller, Department of English, University of Delaware, Newark, DL 19711
- The Writing Instructor. Issue Editor, The Writing Instructor, c/o The Freshman English Program, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089
- Journal of Teaching Writing. Ronald Strahl, Department of English, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN 46202
- Rhetoric Review. Theresa Enos, Department of English, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275