

Dusting Off Instructor's Manuals: The Teachers and Practices They Assume¹

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Recently while cleaning my office, I began piling all of the dusty instructor's manuals in a corner when I was suddenly struck by how many I had accumulated in only a couple of years. Intrigued by the question, "who uses these, anyway?", I decided to look at them more seriously. Although neither the most exciting texts written in our field nor particularly useful to most experienced writing teachers, Instructor's Manuals (IMs) represent a rich untapped resource for analyzing layers of ideology at work in composition studies, especially in their constructions of teachers and teaching that drive most writing programs. Writing program administrators, especially those who rely on or recommend the use of IMs for their teaching assistants or adjunct faculty, may be particularly interested in this analysis.

Along with the course catalogs examined by Susan Miller in *Textual Carnivals*, as well as other course descriptions, policies, and syllabi, IMs are assumed to be "natural" to the conditions of teaching writing in colleges and universities. Lester Faigley points out that "if textbooks are not reliable sources of data for how writing is actually taught, they do reflect teachers' and program directors' decisions about how writing should be represented to students" (133). Instructor's manuals, I would add, reflect decisions about how writing should be represented to new or adjunct teachers, who need to be "disciplined" as subjects right along with students. My purpose here is to demonstrate that IMs operate as mechanisms for training new teachers and for keeping experienced ones in line, but that in doing so, they "flatten" teacher subjectivity to a few predictable variables and create a number of contradictions.

Whether named Guides, Resources for Teaching, or Suggestions for Teaching, IMs are produced to support and supplement the apparatus of a vast majority of the published workbooks, handbooks, rhetorics, and readers in the composition industry. Whether published under separate cover from the textbook, bound with the textbook, or listed in the advertisement as available supplemental material, their presence is often taken for granted. The proliferation of these manuals suggests several possibilities: that many teachers use them; that publishers assume teachers find them valuable; or that WPAs or textbook committees won't order a textbook without a good IM being available. As I shall develop later, their perceived value is directly related to the politics and economics of writing instruction, but in any case, they are produced in abundance. What do these manuals imply about the space of the classroom, the relationships within it, and the work that is being done there?

Given the sheer number and variety of IMs produced annually in our field, this study is preliminary and limited, based on a sample of thirty-two IMs dating back to 1964 and representing a range of workbooks, handbooks, readers, and rhetorics, with 1990s reader IMs slightly dominant in my sample. Concentrating only on IMs that are separate from the textbook, not annotated Instructor's editions, I collected IMs from my own office, the offices of writing program colleagues, and from the Richard S. Beal Collection at the Dimond Library at the University of New Hampshire.² While this study certainly leaves out far more manuals than it includes—and while I cannot claim pure objectivity or a scientific method—it should demonstrate that despite a thirty-year range and a variety of textbooks, these manuals share much in common.

My reading strategy has been to look for the features that seem to characterize IMs most clearly, as well as “special features” that make certain IMs stand out. In addition to noting both similarities and differences among these guides, I've also concentrated on the prefaces and introductory material, where the intended audience and purpose are most directly addressed. For this essay, I've divided the discussion into two parts: first, I examine closely three IMs representative of the publishing industry over three decades and with three types of textbooks: a 1976 rhetoric IM; a 1986 handbook IM; and a 1995 reader IM. In the second section, I turn to a wider pool of texts and a narrower set of issues about the teachers and practices represented in these usually-ignored documents.

Textbook History and Ideology

Robert Connors' essay “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline” traces the emergence of question-laden textbooks to an 1829 edition of Hugh Blair's Lectures, to which were added such questions as “Of what kinds of style did our author treat in the last lecture?” (181-82). Connors argues that question and answer textbooks were designed for the increasing population of “classroom ‘monitors,’ [usually older] students who drilled other students on the lessons. . . . [T]hey were untrained in pedagogy . . . and needed textbooks of a new and very directive sort” (181-82). Question-answer textbooks arose from “a shortage of trained, effective college rhetoric teachers” (183). Textbooks also arose from “a shared system of belief” between textbook sellers and textbook buyers, a belief system based on “theory-unconscious writing instruction” (Welch 270).

In “Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production,” Kathleen Welch claims that textbooks are often instructional material “more important for the writing teacher than for the writing student”—a claim that becomes magnified with IMs, where students are addressed through the teacher (271). Textbooks in Welch's analysis are “persuasive places where new teachers of writing are trained and where experienced ones reinforce the training” (271). Welch's purpose is to expose how textbooks manage to avoid, downplay, or negate any theoretical attention to writing; for example, process becomes just another mode. Since the appearance of Welch's 1987 article, critiques of textbooks have in-

creased in number and in sophistication.

In particular, contemporary theories of subjectivity have triggered some keen analyses of the ways students are constructed by writing textbooks. John Clifford and Lester Faigley have both argued that rhetoric textbooks for first-year writing students—with the best-selling *St. Martin's Guide to Writing* a representative example—construct student subjects as unified, coherent, rational individuals who are expected to compose in isolation, free of conflicts of race, class, gender, or sexuality (see Clifford, 44 ff., and Faigley, 132-62). Not only do these constructions conflict with current theoretical and pedagogical directions in our field, but they also excuse students from taking stands or from engaging in ethical issues. Faigley, as well as Alan France in a 1993 issue of *College English*, also critiques Coles and Vopat's *What Makes Writing Good*. This collection of student essays nominated by teachers across the country rests on "the assumption that individuals possess an identifiable 'true' self and that the true self can be expressed in discourse," through such qualities as honesty and authentic voices (Faigley 122).

What these critiques have in common is their attention to the ways in which subjectivity is flattened or watered down by these textbooks—with difference, diversity, or power relationships erased, or as John Clifford puts it, *transcended*: "almost all contemporary rhetorics . . . [create] the illusion that we can transcend ideology with three well-developed paragraphs of evidence" (44). IMs create a similar illusion with suggested sequences, predictable scenarios, and an abundance of "tips."

Three Representative IMs

In this section, my purpose is to look closely at three representative IMs in order to illustrate their general features and organization and to begin to collect evidence about the ways in which IMs construct the subjectivity of writing teachers and represent the practices and activities of writing classrooms. For this close examination, I have chosen best-sellers in the composition market, re-issued in at least a third edition, and reflective of the three major textbook categories. Each comes from a different large publishing house—Houghton Mifflin; Little, Brown; and Bedford—and each from a different decade: a rhetoric IM from 1976; a handbook IM from 1986; and a reader IM from 1995. The *Instructor's Manuals for Writing With a Purpose* (6th edition), *The Little, Brown Handbook* (3rd edition), and *Rereading America* (3rd edition) illustrate the ways in which IMs are driven by the economic and political mechanisms of writing instruction.

1. *Teaching With a Purpose*—a 1976 rhetoric IM

McCrimmon's *Writing With a Purpose* is one of the top-selling rhetoric textbooks in modern composition. Faigley calls it "resilient" and notes that it has

been in print continuously since 1950 (see his full discussion of McCrimmon 146-56). *Teaching with a Purpose*, like so many IMs, is written by someone other than the textbook author—Webb Salmon, a colleague of McCrimmon's at Florida State University—but it is one of the few to have its "own" title, one which echoes but is distinct from the textbook title. Salmon clarifies his sense of audience from the opening sentence of the Preface: "I have tried to write primarily for the young teacher of composition who wants to consider how another instructor would use *Writing With a Purpose*. If experienced teachers find parts of the manual helpful, I will of course be doubly pleased" (v). Salmon goes on to explain his role, that of "teacher's aid" to busy instructors: "When the teacher's preparation for an exercise would require more time than busy people can afford . . . , I have done the preparation and presented the necessary information" (v). He clarifies that this IM is not meant to be "an all-inclusive text on the teaching of freshman composition," but rather a supplement to the textbook designed to "help us in our work" (v). Also in the preface, Salmon acknowledges help of an assistant (unnamed) and explains that he, along with FSU teaching assistants (also unnamed), have tried out the assignments in class and have suggested revisions based on their classroom experiences. Salmon is also careful to assure us that McCrimmon himself read each chapter of this IM.

As most IMs do, the chapters of *Teaching With a Purpose* follow the same organization and emphasis of the textbook chapters, restating and clarifying the author's emphases, goals, and beliefs about student writing. Throughout the IM, beginning with Chapter 1, Salmon offers reasons for "bad student writing." Absence of purpose, as well as "the tendency to write on general subjects rather than real subjects [are some] of the primary reasons for bad student writing" (2). The solution is to get students to restrict their general topics, and Salmon illustrates a number of restricted "real" subjects for writing (2-3). Chapter 1 goes on to offer possible or characteristic statements for each of the Exercises in the textbook; notably, Salmon does not call them "the answers." ("Answers" are offered only for the handbook of grammar and usage, the final chapter of the textbook.) When the Exercises address a particularly frequent or knotty problem in student writing, Salmon explicates the purpose of the Exercise and gives instructors some sense of how much time they should expect to spend on, for example, thesis statements: "the four exercises on thesis writing are in the chapter for a reason. Your students may need to spend considerable time with them" (4). He also addresses the importance of timing, or when to introduce new material; for example, he suggests not providing sample theses for one assignment "until the students are well on their way to developing their own theses" (9).

The remaining chapters in this IM follow a similar pattern: each chapter begins with a one-sentence overview of the preceding chapter and situates the new chapter within the whole writing process. The claims about the reasons for bad student writing continue, as do the sense of what students will find easy or difficult, e.g., "This exercise should cause little difficulty for most freshmen . . ." (12). Salmon also offers the results when certain exercises were done in his classes or the classes of teaching assistants; for example, he provides sample

statements and questions about a photograph included in the textbook for an exercise on interpretation. Throughout the manual, Salmon presents McCrimmon as the “master teacher,” as he routinely refers to McCrimmon’s beliefs about teaching writing in a particular order, with particular emphases. In teaching patterns of organization, “McCrimmon takes the position that the patterns are worth teaching carefully but that they should be taught in a context which suggests that they are useful techniques for helping the writer to achieve a worthy purpose” (23). Or “McCrimmon knows, as does everyone who has given close attention to the problems of teaching written composition, that style is one of those words used loosely in English classrooms” (67). Salmon also includes anecdotes about other teachers’ strategies and methods, sharing with readers how “one professor impressed a class with the necessity of proofreading” (80) or how one instructor helped a student to write in concrete and specific detail (59).

Salmon routinely offers reasons for most of the suggested exercises and assignments: “One reason for having your students write a process theme is that this kind of assignment lends itself to your emphasizing clarity” (31). Or typical, predictable scenarios are outlined, such as those problems arising from the research paper: “Too often [students] find themselves in the predicament of having to carry on with a project that they see they never should have begun” (121).

After chapters that parallel each of the textbook chapters, including The Essay Examination and The Research Paper, this IM ends with a bibliography—“a selective bibliography for teachers of composition”—with such categories as grammar, usage, rhetoric, semantics, and teaching (145-53). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, several IMs became mini-workshops in the teaching of writing, with a thorough coverage model that demonstrated composition’s growing professionalism. These IMs treat composition as a specialty, requiring specialized knowledge to teach it.

2. Instructor’s Manual to Accompany *The Little, Brown Handbook*—a 1986 handbook IM

“Prepared by” Robert A. Schwegler and Jane E. Aaron, with special assistance from Tori Haring-Smith, this third-edition IM is designed to demonstrate how *The Little, Brown Handbook* can be used in a variety of courses, with a number of emphases, by a variety of teachers: “Whatever use you plan to make of *The Little, Brown Handbook* [LBH] and whether you are a new teacher or an experienced one, you should find this instructor’s manual a useful guide to the handbook and a source of activities and ideas for teaching composition” (v). Chapter 1 offers ideas for “Organizing the Composition Course” with the use of the handbook, which is a valuable resource “partly because of its flexibility” (1). The LBH can be used to support composition courses with three different emphases: on patterns of expression and thought; on the writing process; or on content and ideas (2-6). The LBH can also be used with a variety of other texts (as

well as serving as the only text in a course)—with a reader, rhetoric, or workbook (6-9). In keeping with the research interests of the mid-1980s, this IM also has a section in the first chapter on "Sentence Combining with the Handbook" (9-11) and another on tutoring. Chapter 2 includes commentary on the handbook's "organization, coverage, and possible uses," and suggests assignments and activities for each section of the handbook, as well as ways to use the handbook's ancillaries (13).

Like Salmon, Schwegler and Aaron include special "tips" to instructors about what they should anticipate in course planning or activities: "Because concluding paragraphs often present a special problem, you may wish to highlight the common inept endings that trap students and to suggest satisfactory alternatives" (25-26). Or they let the IM users know what may result from their decisions or choices: "If you choose to use the code or symbols [in commenting on papers], you should remember also that there is nothing in either system to let students know they have done a good job" (104).

A notable feature of this IM is the inclusion of an entire chapter on "Using Collaborative Learning with the Handbook," by Tori Haring-Smith (67-100). Kenneth Bruffee's well-known article appeared two years earlier, in 1984; thus, this textbook publisher was quick to see its importance and to sense the changing tide of the field. This chapter defines collaborative learning and outlines the benefits, and then offers ways to use the handbook in designing collaborative activities. Haring-Smith identifies the particular exercises in the handbook that are particularly well-suited to collaborative work, and those that are not (those that ask for private writing or those exercises where there is only one correct answer). In addition to advice on preparing students to give peer criticism, Haring-Smith also includes eight sample reader-response forms (86-100).

An entire chapter of this IM is devoted to "Evaluating Student Essays," an issue that few IMs address in such depth. Opening with the claim that "[n]othing we do as composition teachers . . . has as much potential for helping students improve their writing as do our responses as sensitive and thorough readers" (101), this chapter includes twenty-six pages of approaches and techniques, including two paragraphs on conferencing. Like the McCrimmon IM, the *LBH* IM includes a selective bibliography for teaching composition, organized by categories and preceded by a list of fifteen journals publishing articles in rhetoric and composition (129-53).

The final section of the *LBH* IM—forty percent of its total pages—contains "Answers to the Exercises" (155-262). While handbook and workbook IMs are, of course, more likely to be "answer guides," it is notable that sixty percent of this IM is concerned with uses of a handbook for a whole-course approach and with larger issues in the teaching of writing (evaluation and collaborative groups).

I want to return briefly to the title page of this IM, where the line "prepared by" highlights the issue of authorship for IMs. "Preparing" an IM is apparently not quite the same as writing one or authoring one. This seemingly minor point says much about the status of IMs in the industry: they are done on

a work-for-hire agreement, with lump sums paid but no royalties. This arrangement makes it possible for others to prepare later IMs without contractual problems, and it illustrates that the textbook as “package” is most important (regarding contractual issues in publishing textbooks, see Winterowd). In other words, IMs are done to serve and promote the textbook. In addition, the larger and more involved the textbook project (mainstream rhetorics or handbooks), the less likely it is that the textbook author will do the IM; thus, Salmon prepares the IM for the McCrimmon book while Schwegler and Aaron (among others for other editions) do the IM for the *LBH*. Reader authors are more likely to write their own manuals.³

3. Resources for Teaching *Rereading America*—a 1995 reader IM

The IM for *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* (3rd edition, 1995), titled “Resources for Teaching,” is written by the reader’s authors, Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. The Preface opens with negative definition, what this teacher’s manual is *not*: “we won’t be offering you a list of ‘right’ answers. Instead, regard this manual as your personal support group” (iii). The Preface goes on to invoke the authority of “hundreds of instructors nationwide” the authors have heard from since the publication of the first edition; the manual, then, is “a forum where we can share some of *their* concerns, suggestions, experiments, and hints” (emphasis mine, iii). The authors provide alternative thematic clusters to those that open the student edition—selections that highlight, for example, gay and lesbian experience or issues of class. Immediately following is a section titled “Addressing Sensitive Issues,” a discussion that would not have appeared in IMs of the 1970s and 80s (and appears here, one assumes, because the hundreds of instructors using earlier editions asked for it). Sections on “Establishing Trust,” “Setting Ground Rules,” “Monitoring Class Dynamics,” and “Understanding Differences,” for a total of over five full pages, illustrates the authors’ belief that in order to use this reader on cultural issues, teachers may need some help dealing with “potentially volatile issues” (6). The authors argue against their critics on page six, acknowledging how teachers and students have different perceptions of a “safe” classroom. Following the advice on class discussion or classroom management are sections on journals and collaborative groups (12-17).

The remaining eighty-one pages of this IM follow the order of the reading selections, with introductions to each chapter and responses to or tips for every selection. These passages include a wide range of ideas, from quick summaries of the readings to advice about how to order and structure the course (“Chapter Four probably isn’t the best place to begin your course” [51]). Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle give background information on the selections and their reasons for their placement, offer their own interpretations of or approaches to the readings, and continually anticipate what IM users will be encountering in their classes. Typical comments include warnings to teachers about what students will find difficult, e.g., “The combination of unfamiliar ideas and an academic style makes

this selection a challenge for many students" (40), or "This is an engaging reading that you shouldn't have any trouble getting students to understand or remember" (79).

Characteristic of this IM are the "rankings" of the readings, not just some indication of which ones students are likely to find difficult, or those that are likely to "raise some hackles" (43), but those that teachers shouldn't miss: "We conclude the chapter with a beautiful poem. Don't skip this even if you're behind schedule" (37), and "Read this one even if you're considering a radical abridgment of the chapter" (54).

The third edition of this IM is well over twice as long as the first-edition IM (1989). Instead of only a one-page preface, whose main recommendation is that teachers give students responsibility for decisions, the third edition contains seventeen pages of pedagogical advice. This much-expanded IM may indicate increasing market demand for more guidance, especially when the content of the course addresses "sensitive issues."

Features of the three IMs examined above can be found in a number of additional texts; perhaps one of the safest generalizations to make about IMs is that they do not vary widely. The goal for most publishers in producing IMs is to have what all other IMs do, plus perhaps one special or distinct feature. This overview of three representative manuals serves as an introduction to the next section, which explores more specific issues, particularly the representations of teachers, students, and practices in these manuals. My discussion below will show that IMs do acknowledge the politically-tenuous position of most writing faculty, but only in their effort to provide pre-packaged courses, with sequences, discussion questions, and tips at hand. Students are treated in one-dimensional ways, as entirely predictable and in need of order and strict management. Despite their role as textbooks to train teachers, IMs offer nearly as much guidance about how the textbook can be used in a variety of courses as they do about classroom practice. In addressing multiple audiences and courses—the key to marketability being flexibility—IMs also frequently invoke the values of teaching experience, possibility, and community.

Packaged Courses, Packaged Teachers

IMs are clearly written for a distinct population within composition studies: the new, inexperienced, often young teaching assistant, as well as part-timers or adjunct professors who may be teaching in more than one institution and who need time-saving tips and devices. In the manual for his 1975 *Handbook of Current English*, Jim Corder's note to teachers identifies three possible audiences for an IM: new teachers of composition; teachers using the *Handbook* for the first time "whose courses aren't already fixed by temperament, circumstance, or department syllabus"; or teachers who wish to save time (1). In addition to direct references regarding the intended audience for these manuals, the suggested syllabi or course outlines, and in some cases, extensive bibliographies on the

teaching of writing, offer evidence that these manuals are for new or perhaps unsupervised teachers of writing. A Prentice-Hall IM claims to be for inexperienced instructors, especially “those who are teaching a formal course for the first time” (Rigg 1). The *Heath Handbook of Composition* IM begins with a course outline and then suggests that “[d]iscussion with experienced teachers of the course will help new instructors form an appropriate plan” (Kelly 1).

Corder sends teachers to different sections of his IM depending on their level of experience and, in general, provides an explanation for each section of who might find it most useful. For new teachers, the early sections cover how to use a handbook in teaching writing, some general suggestions for teaching freshman composition, and some sample course outlines. Experienced teachers, however, may turn directly to later sections, which contain, for example, ways to generate topics (1).

The function of teacher-training is particularly evident in the appearance of bibliographies in IMs of the late 1970s and early 80s. The manual for the 1981 *Heath Handbook of Composition* consists of several comprehensive bibliographies (“Using Class Time,” “Assigning Papers,” and “Commenting On and Grading Papers”) which demonstrate the opening claim that the teaching of writing has become a specialty (Kelly). Bibliographies were particularly important when the vast majority of writing teachers lacked pedagogical training and were unfamiliar with the research and growing literature. With a few exceptions, bibliographies have dropped out of 1990s IMs, perhaps because of the proliferation of graduate programs in rhetoric and composition (Brown *et al.*).⁴

Perhaps the IM in my set that comes closest to a cram course in teaching composition is the manual for Frank D’Angelo’s 1981 *Process and Thought in Composition*.⁵ After surveying various approaches to the teaching of composition, from the more traditional (The Thematic Approach, The Handbook Approach, The Forms of Discourse Approach) to the newer models (The Personal Writing Approach and the Process Approach), D’Angelo offers chapters on Evaluating Student Themes—which include grade distribution sheets and criteria for A, B, C, D, and F themes—and provides sample student essays with discussion of the grade assigned to each. He, too, provides a selected bibliography of teaching composition, with sections on Motivating Student Writing; Journals; Literature and Composition; Audience; Voice; and so on, for a total of thirty-three pages for the *new* teacher before other components are even introduced.

Many features of IMs, including chapter overviews and summaries, rest on an overriding assumption, often stated clearly in the preface, that the guide is designed to save the teacher time. “Our purpose in this manual to accompany *Patterns for College Writing* is to save the instructor time by suggesting the answers we had in mind as we constructed the questions that follow each essay” (*Patterns* Preface). A 1974 handbook IM claims to provide assistance to busy instructors “who often lack the time to work out appropriate exercise solutions” (Rigg). And from a 1980 guide for a rhetoric text: “We hope that the notes will save the instructor the time and trouble of tracking down the material we have

provided" (Brent and Lutz). For readers or rhetorics with readings, summaries or interpretations are provided in case the busy instructor hasn't time to read the whole thing herself or needs a quick reminder. The emphasis on saving the teacher time fits, of course, with what we already know about the politics of institutionalized writing instruction: textbook publishers respond to the reality that most writing teachers are overworked and underpaid women (Bullock and Trimbur; Miller; Holbrook). While on one hand, saving time can be declared an important service, on the other hand, the time-saving emphasis might be doing inexperienced teachers a disservice. For them, reflective teaching is most important, and saving time on preparation does not necessarily help them to build confidence or a sense of authority in the classroom.

References to the new or the busy instructor appear in a number of contexts throughout these IMs. One of the more unusual appears in the Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle IM for *Rereading America*: In a passage providing tips on a selection by Josh Ozersky on "TV's Antifamilies," the authors note that "Tenured faculty may extend question 9 and make Ozersky the centerpiece of their courses by assigning the essay the first day and watching sitcoms throughout every class meeting thereafter" (33). This sarcastic comment operates as an inside joke among IM users—those outside tenure or the tenure process can have a laugh about the sitcom classroom, presided over by a comfortably tenured teacher (where, ironically, a writing textbook and IM wouldn't be needed, anyway).

In the truest sense of "guide," IM authors typically invoke their own authority and classroom experience, especially their familiarity with the particular textbook for which the IM is designed. The prefaces of IMs for subsequent editions frequently open by acknowledging the experience that the IM author has had in using this particular text, as well as the helpfulness of reviewers and correspondents in noting the problems, challenges, and possible rough spots. On one level, these acknowledgements illustrate the collaborative nature of IMs, especially the group effort of subsequent editions. On another level, though, as with Salmon's references to McCrimmon's authority, IMs often construct a hierarchy of teaching experience, with textbook authors at the top, IM authors one level down, and new, young teaching assistants at the bottom.

Experience in the classroom enables teachers to know what to take from the IM and what to ignore; experience also determines who is writing these manuals and who is reading them. At the same time that they assure experienced teachers that their own experience and judgment is best, IMs also want to offer plenty of guidance for the uninitiated in both how to run a classroom and how to use a manual.

In addressing the inexperienced teacher, several IM authors make deliberate points that these manuals should not be seen as answer guides, that the suggested answers have limited applicability. Here are several examples: "[The questions] are *not* meant to be aids to literary analysis" (Morgan iii); "we hasten to add that there are no absolute answers for most of the questions and

that our suggested answers may not always be the best or the most interesting ones" (*Patterns*). Another takes pains to point out that "it would be presumptuous to pretend that this manual has all the best answers. The suggested exercise answers and comments are consequently offered in the spirit of helpfulness and suggestion and are never intended in any way to supersede individual instructor judgment" (Rigg). Bartholomae and Petrosky go so far as to apologize in advance if they seem too dogmatic: "We don't mean to imply that we have a corner on effective teaching" (v).

In their hesitancy to be too prescriptive or dogmatic, IM authors are careful to describe their purpose as that of providing suggestions or "possibilities"—an often-used word in prefaces: e.g., "we hope that the manual suggests possibilities or alternatives that will be useful to you" (Eschholz, Rosa, and Clark iii). Dozens of manuals emphasize the idea of possibilities—that the possibilities for using a text in a classroom are limited only by the teacher's imagination (and the students' cooperation). Despite the extensive coverage of some IMs, therefore, they also claim to be hesitant about dictating a curriculum.

In a related effort to assure teachers that their autonomy in the classroom will not be compromised by the suggestion of possibilities, IM authors often allude to a sense of community or collegiality: "we see this manual as a form of conversation with our colleagues" (Schuster and Van Pelt 1). "What follows is a . . . list of tips and afterthoughts—the sorts of things we find ourselves saying to each other over coffee in the staff room" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1). "We hope you will find the comments interesting . . . in the same way you might enjoy conversation with a colleague" (Callaghan, Kleck, and Martin xxi). The image of IMs as staff room conversations—or as one's own personal support group—provides an interesting contrast to another image of IMs: their function as "policing" mechanisms, used by WPAs to ensure that all instructors are providing similar instruction in the writing process, or that students are given roughly similar experiences in their required writing courses.

It is difficult, however, to give students similar experiences or similar instruction when these textbooks provide a virtual smorgasboard of choices. As Welch and others have noted, rhetoric textbooks have long been associated with the something-for-everyone approach, with process in the first three chapters and Venn diagrams in a later one. While variety and flexibility may be more marketable, it may also confuse new teachers. In a particularly vivid example of flexibility to the point of near absurdity, the manual for *Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers* claims to be suited for the following instructors and their interests: it can be used in a "standard, reading-and-research oriented course"; or a course focusing on rhetorical analysis; or one which attends to style; or one structured around writing across the disciplines; or one using primarily personal writing; or one integrating creative literature with nonfiction (Cain and Rye 1). Its flexibility is so great that this text might be used in any type of writing course, no matter what the emphasis. The introduction goes on to assert the applicability of this text to a number of teaching techniques: "The book suits the

standard lecture-discussion quite well . . . [and the discussion questions] . . . will also prove useful for instructors who opt for a collaborative classroom" (Cain and Rye 1-2).

Similarly, *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* IM "offers an integrated freshman writing program adaptable to the needs of students and the special interests of instructors. . . . *The St. Martin's Guide* is a versatile teaching tool. With this textbook, you can organize a writing course in many different ways and with quite diverse emphases" (Axelrod and Cooper 1; 3). This IM suggests using the *Guide* for courses that emphasize personal experience; library research; or critical thinking and reading skills, which might be structured "around lectures, discussions, workshops, or conferencing" (3).

The marketing message—the plea for unit adoptions—is that textbooks that can be used by any teacher, in any writing course that focuses on any approach or any set of practices. One of the major functions of IMs, therefore, is to show how the "same" book can be used by any teacher, in any program, with any emphasis. In their function as something-for-everyone, IMs represent a number of competing demands and identities, awkwardly straddling the mass market and the local institution.

In fact, IMs reflect quite keenly the multiple contradictions in the teaching of writing and the ways that composition—as Faigley argues throughout *Fragments of Rationality*—is still invested in a modernist ideology of writing and teaching. As ideas and theories have shifted the ground beneath them, teachers slip between competing ideologies, and IMs try to provide the safety net with comforting assurances or defused tensions. IM users are led to believe that another semester of teaching experience may be all that stands between them and autonomy, authority, or confidence in the writing classroom. While experience might make some situations easier to handle, it does not mean that surprises don't occur or that every writing class becomes routine, especially as explorations of postmodernism, feminism, and cultural studies have destabilized even the most firmly-situated process paradigm. Similarly, the strategy of emphasizing all of the textbook's "possibilities" serves to reinforce the illusion that writing teachers at all levels do have choices, that they can actually be autonomous without any consequences. Teachers are represented as inherently rational beings who will, if given a number of possibilities, make the right choices for their students, and their choices will be supported by the "community" of other IM users.

Most of the contradictions in the ways teachers are represented in IMs result from the effort of publishers to provide wide, marketable variety. Other contradictions result from the politics of writing instruction that IMs reduce to an experienced/inexperienced dichotomy: IMs try to address the old pro and the young rookie; the rushed freeway flyer and the reflective graduate student; the self-confident and the insecure. In addition, when teachers are represented as busy (read "disorganized"), and when they are provided with a great deal of guidance and pre-packaged preparation, the assumption is that teachers cannot quite be trusted.

Another set of tensions results because composition's institutional position requires teachers to be both gatekeepers and coaches, a very tricky negotiation for even the most experienced. For example, teachers are asked to orchestrate a student-centered classroom but know very well that they cannot give up (their institutionalized) authority. In the same IM that defines contemporary writing practices through collaboration, journals, and portfolios, instructors are also supplied with five different samples of evaluation checklists—evaluation sheets to attach to papers with qualities ranked strong, weak, or somewhere in between, or with qualities given certain points: in other words, diverse writers—in a classroom where multiculturalism is the main topic—can “score” a possible 20 points for organization or for sentence structure (Lordi and Stanford 1-20). The treatment of evaluation belies the gestures toward a student-centered classroom and reinforces the more powerful ideology: that teachers are to be, at all times, the gatekeeper. And even though a number of recent IMs suggest that teachers should give students decision-making power in the class—thereby giving students a sense of ownership and responsibility—no IM acknowledges how this strategy might have different risks or results depending on a number of factors about the teacher. Would empowering students work the same for a middle-aged male teacher as it would for a young, female teacher, especially if that subject position is accompanied by other cultural “differences”? Marian Yee admits that a teacher's “signs of authority usually win” over the signs of difference, but her entrance into first-day class meetings as a Chinese woman is never comfortable or risk-free (26).

Hired by institutions and bound to a writing program's policies, teachers are also supposed to be individuals in their (privatized) classrooms. IMs' frequent assurances about individualism and autonomy contradict the common writing program practice of having a “standard syllabus” or of requiring teachers to attend in-service workshops. Most of all, these appeals to autonomy fly in the face of the mass textbook market, where publishers thrive on program-wide adoptions, with as many as 2500 students and teachers using the same book.

These thousands of students, just by the virtue of buying the same textbook, begin to share a multitude of characteristics. IMs try to represent a variety of teacher subject-positions, but they construct students in extremely predictable, unvarying ways, shrink-wrapped like a packet of ancillaries. Students are, above all, assumed to be trouble for the new teaching assistant—resistant, recalcitrant, negative. Furthermore, the writing classroom and its occupants are reduced to categories, as if “freshmen” or “college students” or “student writers” cover all contingencies. The frequency of such comments as “This article is going to be difficult for some of your students” or “Students are likely to balk here” reinforces the idea that students across the country are predictable and knowable, and that writing classrooms, despite the many options for how to structure them, do not vary. Such generalizations ignore how students differ across institutions and regions, not to mention how they differ from each other. These “tips” may also lead new teachers to feel that they can

always predict student reactions, or at least that they are prepared for any situation. IMs, in this function, are designed to keep the teacher from being asked hard questions; they act as a helmet of protection in case students throw something unexpected. They offer poise in a package.

Connors claims that rhetoric textbooks were born out of "the weakness and ignorance of untrained teachers, and out of the increasing power of a newly technologized publishing industry that was quickly gaining the ability to control the content of textbooks by the exertion of market pressure" (183). Market pressure is still a key factor in the content of IMs, of course, as are the conditions of teaching composition. But perhaps less obvious are the ways that IMs and the textbooks they supplement reproduce the notion that teacher-subjects will be well-prepared and well-organized, if only they have a book to go by. The ways in which teachers are constructed by these IMs reinforces their institutional powerlessness and may lead them to believe that they can overcome inexperience or a lack of confidence with a thin booklet, paper-covered and stapled.

Similarly, many IMs create the illusion that writing teachers can transcend ideological differences in the classroom by being well-prepared. In these manuals, teachers are assumed to be free of race, class, gender, age, sexuality, material lives or political commitments; the only way in which they differ has to do with their level of experience. The main objective of the teacher is to stay ahead of students, to predict their answers and have a better one, or to ward off any conflict or dissensus. The continual chant of "only suggestions, only suggestions" also gives teachers the illusion of authority, choice, autonomy—when, in fact, many of the textbooks, especially when purchased with a number of ancillaries, are intended to be "packaged courses," for which busy or inexperienced teachers do not have to make many independent decisions.

Conclusion: Complicating the Illusion of Preparedness

One of the reasons that IMs collect dust is that they are typically smaller and thinner than "the real books," often typewritten rather than typeset, with paper covers and staples for bindings (even though recent technological advances have made most IMs look more professional). Their appearance reinforces the idea that in some ways they are not very important, that they are done on the cheap to serve a mass need. After a few years in the field, who needs them to teach a writing class? However, WPAs and others who mentor teaching assistants or supervise adjunct faculty may wish to take a closer look at the IMs for the texts they order.

In the context of the politics of writing instruction—where the laborers are part-timers, adjuncts, teaching assistants, and otherwise tenuous personnel—the proliferation of these manuals suggests that writing program directors don't have time to train everyone, don't get credit for a course based on mentoring, lack knowledge of the discipline, or are overwhelmed with other responsibilities.

However, WPAs might have some power in this marketplace. Because

unit adoptions—mass numbers ordered by programs or departments—drive the textbook market, those WPAs heading up some of the largest writing programs in the country are most responsible for what gets published in successive editions or which IMs undergo revision to address certain needs. WPAs know that a good IM can help to train teaching assistants or new adjuncts; therefore, they should do as much as possible to recommend changes in IMs, changes that don't necessarily reduce teacher preparedness to "tips."

For example, WPAs might suggest that these manuals do more to represent the actual experiences of teachers, especially those who are "young" and inexperienced—success stories as well as horror stories, and stories about the "routine" parts of teaching. *Stories* might bridge the gap between the local institution and the mass-produced IM that now exists. IMs could also provide critical tools with which new teaching assistants could analyze the power relationships in the classroom and the ways in which their own position in the institution situates them. There are, in other words, political reasons for the feelings of insecurity that have little to do with a teacher's age or level of experience. Especially when new teaching assistants and newly-hired adjuncts are sent into classrooms to discuss sensitive and highly-charged political issues, WPAs might also want to see a more complex treatment of classroom dynamics (along the lines of the third-edition *Rereading America* IM) or questions in the apparatus that ask *teachers*—not just students—to reflect on the issues and on their own strategies or approaches.

IMs are understandably contradictory given the nature of our rapidly-evolving field, but publishers might do more to represent the complexity of teachers, students, and classroom practices, rather than attempting to simplify instruction. I once worked at a university where the president announced that "anyone can teach writing." IMs too often seem to operate on the same assumption. Asking IM authors, WPAs, and teachers across differences to practice reflective teaching might effectively challenge the illusion that the teaching of writing can be packaged and sold.

Notes

1. The earliest version of this paper was presented at CCCC, 1994. I want to thank Chuck Schuster, who generously agreed to read an early version, and the anonymous referees for *WPA*, whose comments and suggestions were right on target. This draft has also benefited greatly from the information and insights of my colleague Bob Schwegler, a well-established textbook author (including IMs) and a consultant for Harper-Collins.

2. I was able to visit the Beal Collection and complete this project with a small research grant from the Council of Writing Program Administrators. While the collection currently houses no more IMs than the offices of packrat colleagues, I did find several manuals dating back to 1964 representing a range of workbooks, handbooks, and rhetorics.

3. Information in this paragraph was provided by Bob Schwegler.

4. An exception to this is a bibliography in the George and Trimbur IM for *Reading Culture*. A sign of the changing times, however, this bibliography focuses on cultural studies, not on the teaching of writing.
5. According to Schwegler, the IM for D'Angelo's rhetoric set a new standard for instructor's manuals. Its thorough and comprehensive treatment of the teaching of writing influenced industry-wide attention to the IM.

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