

## Remediating Writing Program Administration

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**re-me-di-a-tion** (rĭ-mē'dē-ā'shən) n. The act or process of correcting a fault or deficiency: "remediate." (*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.*)

"[W]e call the representation of one medium in another *remediation*, and . . . remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (Bolter and Grusin 4).

It seems inevitable that writing teachers will soon face the challenge of teaching what's being called "new media composing" in addition to teaching traditional print literacy and academic discourse. As Kathleen Yancey argued in her 2004 CCCCs address, our profession is at a crossroads that calls for us to radically rethink what we do as writing specialists in order to better prepare our students to become members of a new kind of writing public. In describing that new writing public, Yancey notes, "[W]e *already* inhabit a model of communication practices incorporating multiple genres related to each other, those multiple genres remediated across contexts of time and space, linked one to the next, circulating across and around rhetorical situations both inside and outside school." For Yancey, "This is composition—and this is the *content* of composition" (308). Similarly, in her address to the 2005 Computers and Writing Conference, Andrea Lunsford argued for the need to redefine writing in response to what she calls "secondary literacy," echoing Walter Ong's concept of secondary orality—a literacy, she says, "that is both highly inflected by oral forms, structures, and rhythms and highly aware of itself as writing, understood as variously organized and mediated systems of signification" (170). More specifically, Lunsford offers the following redefinition:

Writing: A technology for creating conceptual frameworks and creating, sustaining, and performing lines of thought within those frameworks, drawing from and expanding on existing

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conventions and genres, utilizing signs and symbols, incorporating materials drawn from multiple sources, and taking advantage of the resources of a full range of media. (171)

Such a definition, she notes, attempts to capture a sense of “Writing as epistemic, performative, multivocal, multimodal, multimediated” (171).

In this essay, I want to focus on the role that writing program administrators can and should play in this process of redefining writing and thus, arguably, in shaping the future of the discipline of composition. Obviously, redefining writing will require changes in our work as writing program administrators, changes I am calling a remediation of writing program administration in both senses of the word: a correcting of a deficiency and a recasting of a prior message in a new medium. Writing programs are deficient to the extent that they limit their view of writing to traditional alpha-centric texts. Remediating writing program administration will involve recasting what writing programs do—the kinds of discourse they value and teach—in ways that promote a wider range of composing practices. Writing program administrators, who often manage a large group of writing instructors and have responsibility for establishing learning outcomes and curriculum for writing courses, can have a powerful influence on how others define and teach writing. And because WPAs also often manage or network with support programs for writers—writing centers, computer labs, teaching and learning centers—they are also in a position to influence the material conditions in which writing is taught. Finally, because WPAs are typically the spokespeople for writing at their institutions, they have an obligation to provide intellectual leadership by mounting arguments, especially with administrators, which have the potential to lead to widespread change.

Calls for redefining writing and for redefining what writing programs should do have come from a number of arenas, including communication (Kress, Kress and Van Leuwen), education (Cope and Kalantzis, Gee) and more recently, composition studies itself (Lunsford ; Selber; R. Selfe; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe and Sirc; Yancey.) Although terms for this expanded definition of writing vary, two key concepts recur: multiliteracy and new media composing. The term “multiliteracy” emphasizes the importance of valuing more than a single print-centric literacy, including those literacies facilitated and supported by computer technologies—visual, audio, multi-media, and digital. Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis explain that a pedagogy of multiliteracies is a necessary response to “the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral, and so on” (5). Interestingly, Cope, Kalantzis and the other educators who

make up The New London Group advocate for multiliteracy as a necessary response to our increasingly multicultural, multilingual society.<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is not just the availability of new communication technologies that is pressing us to expand our definition of writing but also the recognition that in an increasingly global society, we need to widen the scope of the kinds of communication available to us as workers and citizens.

“New media composing” is the newer term to be used in composition circles and refers more explicitly to the *production* of new kinds of texts, especially those now made possible for the average writer thanks to increasingly accessible digital technologies. Although the term “new media composing” does not yet have a fixed definition, I use it here to refer broadly to the production of texts that employ more than words as the medium of communication. The “new” in “new media” contrasts with the traditional kinds of texts produced in composition classes: word-only essays, formatted in 12 pt. Times New Roman and printed on 8 ½ by 11-inch white paper. In defining “new media composing,” Anne Wysocki emphasizes the degree to which new media texts draw attention to the materials with which they are made (15). Similarly, Cheryl Ball focuses on texts that “juxtapose semiotic modes in new and aesthetically pleasing ways and, in doing so, break away from print traditions so that written text is not the primary rhetorical means” (“Show, Not Tell” 405). Diverging a bit from these definitions, I include in my definition of new media writing those texts that have clearly established genre conventions but are not what most students or writing teachers think of as “writing”: tri-fold pamphlets, posters, websites, videos, T-shirts, flyers. Although these kinds of texts are so ubiquitous as to go without notice by readers and thus are arguably not “new,” to produce effective versions of these texts requires the average college writer to do new kinds of rhetorical thinking and the average college composition teacher to formulate new pedagogical approaches. These kinds of writing also require students and teachers to use new writing tools or to use familiar writing tools in more complex ways. Since writing programs concern themselves both with how students process meaning (literacy) and how students make meaning (composing), both terms—“multiliteracy” and “new media writing”—are important to a remediation of writing program administration.

One obvious reason for writing program administrators to embrace new media writing is that, although the ability to use words effectively will always have value, there is little doubt about the influence of new media texts in professional and public life. As Cope and Kalantzis argue, our teaching of writing needs to catch up with cultural changes in the workplace, the public sphere, and even our personal lives. As they put it, “when

technologies of meaning are changing so rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning” (6). The New London Group bases their theory of multiliteracy on the idea of semiotic activity as “design.” In this theory of discourse, semiotic activities involve the “creative application and combination of conventions . . . that in the process of Design, transforms at the same time it reproduces these conventions” (20). More importantly, “the outcome of Designing is a new meaning, something through which meaning-makers remake themselves” and the world around them (23). If teaching students to be multiliterate will give them more agency in their lives by enabling them to remake themselves and their worlds—what Cope and Kalantzis call “social futures”—why shouldn’t this expanded notion of literacy inform all of the writing students are asked to do, including in required composition courses?

This push to include new media composing as a regular part of writing courses is also important because it is happening at a time when composition studies has begun to assert a stronger identity independent of traditional English Departments.<sup>2</sup> The establishing of an independent disciplinary identity requires that we embrace an object of study complex enough to justify Ph.D. programs, academic journals, tenure-track positions, majors, and departments. The complexities of new media writing help provide additional justification beyond that provided by our attention to more traditional kinds of texts and composing processes. Although fields such as communication, graphic arts, and technical writing study digital texts, none focuses on the production of these texts by ordinary writers, including student writers, which is arguably the natural purview of composition studies. And while identifying new media writing as part of the domain of composition may provoke hostility from departments that see us as infringing on their territory, such tension ought to be treated as an opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration. Surely students would benefit from being introduced to multimodal composing in lower-level writing classes, thus laying a foundation for more advanced study of such composing in majors, whether that be in English or in Communication.

Furthermore, disciplinary fields are expected to grow in response to changes that affect their objects of study. The field of biology isn’t defined in exactly the way it was 10 years ago, nor is philosophy. Nor should composition be. Foundational disciplinary knowledge needs to be constantly re-interpreted in light of new knowledge, and the new knowledge about writing produced by our experiences with new media composing necessitates such a reinterpretation. Though some might prefer not to explore new definitions of writing and thus limit our disciplinary focus to alpha-centric literacy and print texts, such a limitation does not seem wise for a field as

young as composition studies with so much room to grow and with a vested interest in affecting change in the way writing is perceived and produced both within our institutions and in the larger culture.

#### THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The relationship between writing program administration and what Richard J. Selfe calls technology-rich writing instruction is complex and often fraught with tension. As Selfe notes, many in composition have been comfortable “maintaining the culture’s conventional separation of arts and technology” (7). Though they may use computers in their homes, offices, and classrooms, many in composition have not yet taken responsibility for “planning for technology; thinking critically about technology; systematically assessing the value of technology; or making the difficult decisions associated with technological infrastructures and policies” (8). Todd Taylor similarly concludes that “Technology can be a source of extreme anxiety, especially for humanist educators” (Ten Commandments 241), acknowledging that, for writing program administrators, “The additional responsibility of being an expert on instructional technology is not something easily added to an often already overburdened workload” (228). As evidence of the seeming disconnect between the interests of writing program administrators and digital literacy, Taylor notes that “between 1989 and 1997 *WPA* did not publish a single article about changes taking place in computers and writing” (228). Articles published in *WPA* from 1997 to the present suggest a similarly limited interest in theorizing the development of technology-rich writing programs aimed at turning students into, in Taylor’s words, “media producers” rather than just “media consumers” (Design, Delivery and Narcolepsy, 139).<sup>3</sup>

Lest we be tempted to put all the blame for this digital divide on writing program administrators, the journals *Computers and Writing* and *Kairos* exhibit a similar lack of interest in writing program issues, being more likely to focus on the pedagogical work of individual teachers.<sup>4</sup> Anderson and his colleagues’ 2005 survey of teachers of new media writing revealed that virtually all of the teachers in his study taught new media composing outside the parameters of (and often without the support of) their departments or programs, with the exception of technical writing and other advanced writing courses. As Anderson et al. reported, “Eighty-four percent of respondents (n=37) responded that multimodality was taught ‘on an individual teacher basis’” while only 32% reported that multimodality was taught in specific courses (rather than by specific teachers) (69). Based on these published representations of our work, new media composing in composi-

tion courses seems to be occurring primarily at the impetus of individual teachers interested in doing and teaching this kind of writing; it has not yet become a widespread feature of many writing programs, not yet something most teachers and most students in composition courses do.<sup>5</sup>

This finding isn't surprising if we consider that the normal trek to becoming a writing instructor or even a WPA—often through a traditional literature-based English department—is unlikely to include opportunities to develop skills in new media composing. Even those currently enrolled in Ph.D. programs in Rhetoric and Composition may not have graduate courses or other forms of training in new media writing and teaching available to them. Typically, preparation to teach computer-intensive writing has been offered to those teachers who elect it, usually in the context of teaching in a computer classroom or preparing to teach a distance education course. Teachers might participate in workshops that encourage them to teach with technology, but the focus is typically on how to use computers to teach academic discourse and facilitate the production of traditional academic texts. For example, workshops available at my university and sponsored by the writing program I direct have included training for using our course management system, using online discussion boards, creating effective Power Point presentations, responding online to student writing, and so on. None of these activities challenges traditional definitions of writing or traditional ideas about the kinds of texts we should be producing or teaching our students to produce.

The fact that most writing programs have limited access to computer classrooms has likely been a factor in maintaining a division between those who identify as computer-intensive teachers and those who don't. But with the advent of campus-wide course management systems and students' increased use of digital technologies for their own purposes, such divisions make increasingly less sense. Students use computers for writing outside the classroom in more or less the same ways as they do in a computer classroom. Yet, preparation for teaching writing has not changed in ways that seriously address the degree to which the very definition of writing is changing. A glance through some of the most popular texts used in the preparation of writing teachers—Tate and Corbett's *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, Lindemann's *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Wilhoit's *The Allyn and Bacon Teaching Assistant's Handbook*—suggests that little has changed in the teaching of writing in the last decade or two.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps more significantly, Chris Anson's 1999 *College English* article "Distant Voices: Teaching Writing in a Culture of Technology" that warns compositionists against giving in uncritically to demands to technologize the teaching of writing has been widely reprinted in books aimed at teacher preparation courses. As Anson

puts it, “Our key roles—as those who create opportunities and contexts for students to write and who provide expert, principled response to that writing—must change in the present communications and information revolution. But we cannot let the revolution sweep over us. We need to guide it, resisting its economic allure in cases where it weakens the principles of our teaching” (275).<sup>7</sup> Although Anson himself is not a Luddite, the tone of this piece is cautionary, thus reinforcing the very anxiety about digital technologies that Richard Selfe, Todd Taylor, and others say is common among many academics in the humanities. Granted, given the time it takes to revise a book and get it into the hands of new teachers, these teacher-training resources are not likely to represent the latest thinking in our field. But that is all the more reason for writing program administrators to compose and publish in alternate forms that would make possible the more rapid exchange of information necessary to a widespread remediation of writing programs. Until teacher-training materials are remediated (a necessary consequence of remediating writing programs), the teaching of writing will continue to be represented in limited and arguably outdated ways.

Systematic attention to the importance of new media writing for writing programs has been similarly limited in published resources for writing program administrators. For example, Stuart Brown and Theresa Enos’s *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource*, published in 2002, includes only one chapter about computers and writing, “Writing Program Administration and Instructional Computing” by Ken S. McAllister and Cynthia L. Selfe; Irene Ward and William Carpenter’s 2001 *Allyn and Bacon Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators* also includes a single chapter, Todd Taylor’s “Ten Commandments for Computers and Composition.” Both chapters provide practical advice for writing program administrators regarding how to get involved in making technology decisions that affect their writing programs, and both emphasize that technology has changed writing in ways that necessitate our involvement. But neither essay argues for a redefinition of writing based on the new kinds of writing digital technology makes possible, preferring instead to focus on how technology can help WPAs meet their current goals. As Taylor puts it, “WPAs should base the choices they make regarding computers on the purpose of their program” (235). McAllister and C. Selfe prompt writing program administrators to ask a similar question “What are the instructional goals of the writing program? How can these goals be made to drive a computer-based program/course/activity/facility/decision?” (345).

In both chapters, the authors invite writing program administrators to focus on how technology can support their pre-existing learning outcomes for writing classes, rather than advising WPAs to consider how technol-

ogy might change those outcomes—not for the sake of learning technology alone, but for the sake of defining writing in a more inclusive way, as Cope and Kalantzis insist that we must. I see the “writing outcomes first, technology second” as a limitation in these otherwise very useful chapters only because they seem to give WPAs permission not to rethink their program outcomes if they are not personally inclined to do so. The placement of these chapters—the McAllister and Selfe chapter is placed 23<sup>rd</sup> of 30 essays and the Taylor chapter is 16<sup>th</sup> of 23 chapters—also suggests that attending to how technology affects writing and thus writing instruction is more optional than required. Rather than fault McAllister and Selfe or Taylor, whose scholarship typically embraces expanded notions of writing and literacy, the more limited view of writing depicted in these chapters may have been addressed specifically to the iconic writing program administrator who doesn’t see herself as a “computers and writing person.” Certainly, writing program administrators have so many bureaucratic obligations and material constraints on their work that thinking seriously about multiliteracy or new media composing may seem like something that can be done later or by someone else or not at all. But to the extent that current digital technologies are shaping the future of writing, as so many theorists have argued, writing program administrators cannot afford to focus only on using computers to do better what they have always done: delivering instruction in how to produce alpha-centric academic discourse.

This seeming division between writing program administration and computers and writing can also be seen in the debate over the inclusion of a “technology plank” in the WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Writing, adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in 2000 (*WPA: Writing Program Administration* 23.1/2 (Fall/Winter 1999): 59–66. Some of those in support of including specific technology outcomes argued pragmatically that technological literacy is key to writing and that by articulating its importance, the WPA organization could help institutions appeal for more technology resources.<sup>8</sup> Other advocates, such as Cynthia L. Selfe and Patricia L. Ericsson, insisted that writing teachers need to go beyond teaching currently accepted literacies in order to “help students negotiate and reconcile the contested values and practices of composing they will encounter and produce during their lifetimes” (33). Arguing that “some of our print-based expectations for writing instruction and revered curricular practices will hold a declining relevance for many students as well as for the general public,” Ericsson and Selfe propose that “We must extend our own understanding of ‘composing’ practices to include a range of other behaviors: reading and composing images and animations; creating multimedia assemblages; combining visual elements, sounds, and language



symbols into alternatively organized and presented forms of communication on the web, in chat rooms, over networks” (33). This recommendation, of course, echoes those of Kathleen Yancey and Andrea Lunsford cited in the beginning of this article. Conversely, those opposing the inclusion of explicit technology-related outcomes in the WPA Outcomes Statement expressed concern about seeming to require technology-rich writing instruction when many institutions cannot afford it. Others suggested that specifying technology outcomes would be impractical, given how rapidly technologies change, or that being able to use the technologies necessary to achieve the other learning outcomes is assumed. Although there has been a recent resurgence of interest in revising the Outcomes Statement to include more explicit attention to the relationship between technology and composition (beginning with a meeting at the WPA Conference in Anchorage in 2005 and continuing as this article goes to press), the technology outcomes proposed continue to focus on the uses of technology to support the production of traditional academic texts. In other words, the Council of Writing Program Administrators has not (yet) publicly advocated for expanding the goals of writing instruction to include new media composing as suggested by Selfe and Ericsson. I do not want to suggest that the WPA organization or even writing program administrators as a group are actively resisting a redefinition of writing to include new media composing, only that the redefining of writing—and thus the remediation of our work—has not yet been a priority.

There are a number of reasons why writing program administrators in general may not yet have taken up the challenge to remediate their writing programs.<sup>9</sup> Some WPAs may not yet be convinced of the merits of expanding the kind of writing they sponsor. As Taylor noted, for many WPAs, technology can seem to pose a threat to our humanist values. We are especially prone to resist technologies that threaten human agency. This resistance is often legitimate. As Chris Anson reminds us, WPAs have had to respond to administrative pressures to accept technologies they believed were bad for writing instruction: computerized scoring of essays, plagiarism-detection software, under-resourced distance education.<sup>10</sup> Another reason WPAs may be cautious about redefining writing to include new media composing is out of concern that doing so would compromise our institutional obligation to prepare students for college writing. Until new media writing is routinely assigned in other college classes, teaching it in composition classes will necessarily take away from time spent on what seems to be more relevant: traditional academic writing. Similarly, many writing faculty believe that what their students need most—not just for college but for the workplace and beyond—are traditional academic literacies.

This commitment to the teaching of traditional academic literacies may be especially strong in places where students come to college with limited academic preparation or where students face competency tests based on traditional reading and writing skills. Faculty in these situations may feel duty-bound to prioritize the teaching of such skills. Even those WPAs who are persuaded of the need to remediate their writing programs to include new media composing can face significant challenges. Initially such a task can appear overwhelming—it means revising course outcomes, rewriting curriculum, rethinking professional development for teachers, and convincing others of the merits of these changes. In addition, most WPAs would need to argue for additional institutional resources—classrooms or labs, computers or wireless networks, software, technical support. Surely one of the biggest challenges is simply finding time to make these kinds of significant changes in one's writing program, especially in the absence of clear institutional incentives (and rewards) for doing so.

These are all valid explanations for our slowness as WPAs in redefining writing to include new media writing as a normal part of our composition programs. I want to note at least one more: even if WPAs are persuaded that they need to redefine writing in the programs they direct—and thus revise learning outcomes, curriculum, and teacher-training programs—they may simply lack the knowledge and skills they need to feel confident about pursuing these goals. Advice for writing program administrators regarding the integration of technology in their programs often suggests that WPAs need not be computer specialists themselves. And yet, common sense tells us that in order to create new media composing assignments and to help teachers teach them, we have to know how to do that kind of writing and teaching ourselves. We can no longer refuse to engage with new media composing because it isn't our thing or because we feel we are already too far behind the learning curve. We need to understand writing as it is currently being performed, to use Andrea Lunsford's term, and we need to understand it functionally, rhetorically, and critically, as Stuart Selber argues in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*. According to Selber, the objective of functional literacy is effective employment of computers as tools. With critical literacy, the objective is the ability to see computers as cultural artifacts and to engage in productive critique of the role of computers in culture. Rhetorical literacy involves being producers and agents of technology (rather than passive consumers) who are capable of reflective practice (25). According to Selber, students need all three forms of computer literacy. Arguably, so do writing program administrators.

Here, I am speaking to myself as well as to WPAs in general. Although I have supervised computer classrooms, taught courses in cyberliteracy, and

published a few articles about computers and writing, the new emphasis on composing new media texts (a shift away from a focus on “teaching with technology”) means I still have a lot to learn if I want to be able to remediate the writing program I direct. I’d like to be more familiar with widely-used software programs like Photoshop, Dreamweaver, I-Movie, and Audacity. I should have a repertoire of new media writing assignments that have “worked” and on which I can base new curriculum initiatives. I should know more about the challenges teachers and students will face trying to learn these new composing skills, so I can prepare to meet those challenges. And I should be aware of how other writing programs have successfully transitioned into more complex forms of writing, so I am not reinventing the wheel. Unfortunately, none of this new knowledge is easy to come by. To learn what I need to know, I have to acquire the necessary tools—hardware and software; I’ve got to identify the best way to learn (workshops, classes, books, one-to-one help, self-teaching); I’ve got to make time to learn; I have to create a rhetorical exigency that justifies (if only to myself) my giving over the necessary time to learn; and I have to change my professional life to include this new kind of writing. For every webpage I need to update, every multimedia presentation I choose to create, something I used to do will have to go.

#### REMEDiate ME?

As should be clear, for many WPAs interested in remediating our writing programs, the requisite knowledge won’t be gained until we agree that learning to compose new media texts is part of our job. In the final chapter of *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, called “Systematic Requirements for Change,” Stuart Selber identifies eight necessary conditions for a remediation of writing programs.<sup>11</sup> The first condition, according to Selber, is “a significant dissatisfaction with the status quo” (226). This, I believe, may be the hardest condition for writing program administrators to meet. So many of us come into our administrative jobs with the work already laid out for us that we rarely have time or opportunity or energy to completely reimagine our programs, especially if doing so will take us into areas where we are not yet prepared to go. As Andrea Lunsford observes about the remediation of the writing curriculum at Stanford:

Redefining terms is one thing; realizing and fully implementing any such redefinitions is quite another. Indeed, we have learned that teaching writing based on a substantive redefinition of writing affects every single aspect of our work: our theories of writing, our curriculum, our classroom configura-

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tions, our staffing, training, evaluation principles and procedures, our relationships with other programs (and with upper administration), and our methods and materials. (176)

Perhaps most importantly, such a redefinition should also change us as writers—should in fact grow out of our changing convictions about the nature of writing. Indeed, I want to argue that the remediation of writing programs and writing program administration won't happen until WPAs learn and use new meaning-making technologies for our own purposes, not just facilitate their use by others. Here, then, we smack up against Selber's second precondition for change: "Those who are centrally involved in the change process itself must have the requisite knowledge and skills needed to get the job done" (226). It only makes sense that writing program administrators need to become multiliterate before we can successfully develop writing programs in which multiliteracy is the goal.

If we take Selber's three literacy objectives as goals for us as WPAs, it is likely that most of us are already critically literate—aware of technology as a cultural artifact—and perhaps even rhetorically literate in the sense that we know enough about various kinds of new media composing to imagine how different digital forms, genres, and outlets might be effectively used in specific contexts. However, if the writing teachers and WPAs I know are representative at all, most of us still have a ways to go to become functionally literate in terms of producing texts that go beyond traditional academic writing. Even if we are capable of producing new media texts, relatively few of us regularly engage in such composing as a part of our daily professional lives as writing program administrators who are also scholars and teachers of writing. There has been seemingly little incentive and even less reward for doing so.

Two recent articles make cogent, albeit very different, arguments for the rewards of undertaking this work. In "Show, Not Tell: The Value of New Media Scholarship," Cheryl E. Ball argues that the actual production of new kinds of texts will make the reading and evaluating of those texts—with their non-linear, often multi-modal means of making arguments—more familiar and eventually more valuable to the academy (410). Although Ball is primarily interested in the production of texts "that juxtapose semiotic modes in new and aesthetically pleasing ways" rather than simply remediating traditional texts by making them available online, her point about modeling new kinds of writing so that they become better understood and more widely accepted is relevant to my argument here. If WPAs are going to take responsibility for writing in new ways, as I have argued they should, then this new writing will need to become recognized as intellectual work by the institution and the profession more generally. Once WPAs expect to

do this kind of writing (and expect to be rewarded for doing it), they will build it into their work lives, and their professional values will pervade the programs they run, including the training and support they provide to the writing teachers they supervise. This is a very different professional stance than thinking of oneself as a computers and writing specialist whose interests one does not expect others to embrace with the same enthusiasm.

Rebecca Moore Howard also reflects on the value of new media composing for writing program administrators in her article “WPAs and/vs Administrators: Using Multimedia Rhetoric to Promote Shared Premises for Writing Instruction.” She describes the effectiveness of a multimedia presentation she and her colleagues created to showcase the Syracuse University writing program for the Board of Visitors, noting especially the impact of short videos of students describing their writing experiences on Board members and members of the administration. Howard observes that the multimedia presentation succeeded in explaining the writing program better than more conventional texts (such as annual reports and other documentation of administrative work) because images, especially of students, were able to appeal to *pathos*, not just *logos*. As Howard puts it, “If we WPAs are going to be in a position to participate fully in the crucial conversations about our own curricula, helping our colleagues understand what it is our programs do and why it is valuable, we need new tools” (19).

One way in which writing program administrators are already using these tools to participate in crucial public conversations about writing is through The Network for Media Action. This group of writing program administrators is committed to monitoring and responding to media stories about writing and encouraging other WPAs to do so as well. As such, they clearly recognize the value of new media texts by also producing them. Recently, they produced a calendar that was distributed through textbook representatives and at present, the NMA is at work making a video of ordinary writers talking about their writing, titled the “National Conversation on Writing,” that will be screened for various audiences and made publicly available on the Web. The work of the NMA is already available to other writing program administrators (for their participation or their use) through the NMA link on the website for the Council of Writing Program Administrators (<http://www.wpacouncil.org/>), otherwise known as Digital WPA. The fact that the Council of Writing Program Administrators has invested a portion of its budget in designing and maintaining this site, which not only makes resources and information available to WPAs but also provides members of WPA with blogging space, is a sign that our professional organization fully supports the composing of new media texts as part of our professional work. (The WPA organization has also offered a one-day tech-

nology-focused workshop prior to the beginning of the official conference in 2005 and 2006.) Some progress toward remediating writing program administration has thus clearly been made at the organizational level. But such progress does not require individual writing program administrators to move beyond the binary that identifies new media writing as something best left to specialists. The use of these tools is still optional.

As I noted earlier, this argument that the remediation of writing programs depends on writing program administrators becoming new media composers is one that I am addressing to myself as well as others; thus, I am especially mindful of the challenges I am posing. How as WPAs can we begin to take on the task of remediating ourselves and our own writing? There are a few obvious places to start:

- First, we can explore our own campuses in order to identify technology training and resources, including human resources—people who can help advise us about what we need to learn and how we might learn it (and those people may be faculty, students, or staff, in our own or other departments, in teaching centers, writing centers, or technology centers).
- We can commit ourselves to attending training workshops and sitting in on classes, when available.
- We can ask our Chairs or Deans to provide the software and hardware necessary for us to do this work.
- We can seek grants and other sources of funding to support our participation in local or regional classes or workshops, such as the Digital Media and Composition Workshop led by Cynthia Selfe and Scott DeWitt at Ohio State (<http://dmp.osu.edu/DMAC/default.htm>).

All of this learning would be most fruitful if applied to a specific outcome intended to address a real rhetorical exigency: an informational video like the one Rebecca Howard describes, the implementation of electronic teaching portfolios for teaching assistants, the inclusion of a multimedia writing assignment in a specific composition course.<sup>12</sup>

Still, for many of us, having learning resources available and a specific project in mind may not be enough to keep us motivated to continue working at doing something new, especially when so many other responsibilities demand our attention and when the new thing we are trying to learn does not come easily. (I'm guessing that the Dreamweaver and Photoshop interfaces were not created by or for people who like linear, academic texts.) This is why we must consciously create and participate in a community of like-minded peers, other WPAs and writing instructors who want to remediate

their writing programs—and themselves—but can't or won't do it alone. And it is up to us to create such a community.

In *Sustainable Computer Environments: Cultures of Support in English Studies and Language Arts*, Richard J. Selfe attempts to lay out the conditions necessary for fostering and sustaining program-wide, technology-intensive writing and writing instruction. He begins by defining a “culture of support” as “an ensemble, team-driven effort that can help sustain the teaching of literacy in innovative, technology-rich environments” (23). Selfe emphasizes the importance of putting together a team of stakeholders (that ultimately includes teachers, students, technology-support personnel, and administrators) who will meet regularly to plan, share, and critique their work. Similarly, in his discussion of the Computer Writing and Research Laboratories (CWRL) in the Division of Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas at Austin, John Slatin uses Etienne Wenger’s term “community of practice” to describe the importance of putting together the kind of team Selfe advocates for, one characterized by “(1) mutual engagement in (2) a joint enterprise, using—and creating!—(3) a shared repertoire of tools, artifacts, ideas, information, etc.” (R. Selfe 30–1). Jim Porter, too, emphasizes the value of being part of a community of practice as he learned to use increasingly complex technologies to enhance his teaching and writing. He describes his entry into the field of professional writing as essentially a collaborative one:

As we worked side-by-side in the lab, we exchanged information, talked about teaching and about writing projects, and taught ourselves to use Adobe PAGEMAKER and the advanced functions of Microsoft WORD. It was an extraordinarily rich learning environment. . . . [T]he help occurred in a community of practice, a group of people who were learning and theorizing and teaching each other about new writing technologies. . . . (381)

Although many of my technologically expert friends and colleagues claim to have learned to use technology primarily on their own, I’ve become increasingly convinced that key to a widespread multiliteracy that includes the capacity for producing new media writing is the establishment of communities of practice wherein learners of all kinds—those with a natural affinity for technology and those without—can come together to share this work of remediating ourselves and our writing programs.

In this essay, I have tried to point out a number of exigencies that should motivate us as writing program administrators to undertake a remediation of our work: calls for a redefinition of writing to include new media

composing and for attending to that writing throughout the curriculum; the need to train teachers and students to do the kind of writing a changing workplace and changing public sphere will require; the need to better understand—through research and pedagogical reflection—how to learn and how to teach these new kinds of writing; the need to circulate more informed ideas about writing within our various publics in forms those publics will pay attention to; and the need to share more resources so that the work of remediating writing programs can spread more easily. Certainly, some writing program administrators have already begun to answer these calls. My hope is that as a profession, we will come to see the widespread remediation of writing programs as a goal for all of us. Those who are well on their way might think further about how to use their experience and skills to help bring along those of us who are struggling to begin, while those of us just beginning need to commit ourselves to the task—and to each other, as a community of practice—so that together, we can participate fully in a changing world of writing.

## NOTES

1. An international group of scholars, now referred to as The New London Group, originally met in New London, New Hampshire, in 1994 to consider the future of literacy. The manifesto that grew out of that meeting, “Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,” published in the *Harvard Educational Review* 66 (1996): 60–92, was co-authored by Courtney B. Cazden, Bill Cope, Norman Fairclough, James Paul Gee, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress, Carmen Luke, Sarah Michaels and Martin Nakata. That essay serves as the introductory chapter in the edited collection, *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*.

2. Consider the burgeoning number of writing majors, both within English Departments and in separate departments, described at <[http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/faculty/mcleod/documents/Writing\\_Majors\\_final.doc](http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/faculty/mcleod/documents/Writing_Majors_final.doc)> . See also the Special Issue on the Writing Major, *Composition Studies* 35.1 2007.

3. Some exceptions include Mary Hocks, “Using Multimedia” *WPA* 25.1/2(2001): 25–43; Morgan Gresham and Kathleen Yancey “New Studio Composition” *WPA* 28.1/2 (2004): 9–28; and Dennis Lynch and Anne Francis Wysocki, “From First Year Composition to Second Year Multiliteracies” *WPA* 26.3 (2003):149–70. It’s notable that two of these three articles describe WAC initiatives rather than first-year writing initiatives.

4. Exceptions include Joe Moxley and Ryan Meehan “Collaboration, Literacy, and Authorship: Using Social Networking Tools to Engage the Wisdom of Teachers” in *Kairos* 12.1 (Fall 2007) <[http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/12.1/binder.html?praxis/moxley\\_meehan/index.html](http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/12.1/binder.html?praxis/moxley_meehan/index.html)> ; Anthony T. Atkins, “Writing/



Teachers and Digital Technologies: Technology/Teacher Training in *Kairos* 10.2 <<http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/10.2/praxis/atkins>>; and Barb Blakely Duffelmeyer, "Learning to Learn: New TA Preparation in Computer Pedagogy" *Computers and Composition* 20(2003): 295–311. While Moxley and Meehan do discuss the use of new media writing technologies for both teacher and student composing, Atkins and Duffelmeyer focus on preparing teachers to teach with computers but not necessarily to compose new media texts or to teach their students to compose them.

5. This is not to say that no writing programs include new media composing in their required composition courses. See for example, those at Michigan Tech, Stanford, Purdue, and Ohio State. I am noting only that our journal publications suggest a divide between the interests of WPAs and the interests of computers and writing specialists.

6. Although all three of these texts include some discussion of the effects of computers on writing or the teaching of writing, they still assume that composition students are producing traditional academic essays. Granted, the publication dates of these three texts mark them as outdated (Corbett, Tate, and Myers' *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* (1999), Lindemann's *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*(2001), or Wilhoit's *The Allyn and Bacon Teaching Assistant's Handbook* (2002)). Nevertheless, according to a survey of writing program administrators on the discussion list WPA-L, these texts are still widely assigned in writing pedagogy courses. Cheryl Glenn and Melissa Goldthwaite's 2008 edition of *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing* does provide more substantive treatment of new media composing and teaching, which signals a recognition by the editors that changes in the nature of writing need to be accounted for in the preparation of writing teachers. A list of books and articles frequently used by WPAs in the preparation of writing teachers can be found in CompFAQs on the CompPile website, <<http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/ReadingLists/Top5ForNewTeachers>>.

7. Anson, Chris M. "Distant Voices: Teaching Writing in a Culture of Technology." *College English* 61.3 (1999): 1–20. Reprinted in *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader* (2nd ed.). Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003; *Background Readings for Instructors Using the Bedford Handbook* (6th ed). Ed. Glenn Blalock. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001; *Writing in an Electronic World*. Ed. Ann B. Bailey. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2000; *Trends and Issues in Postsecondary English Studies*(Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000). 167–189; *Dialogue on Writing: Rethinking ESL, Basic Writing, and First-Year Composition*. Eds. Geraldine DeLuca, Len Fox, Mark-Ameen Johnson, and Myra Kosen. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002.

8. The opinions described here without benefit of citation are drawn from my memory of several public discussions of the Outcomes Statement in progress at both CCCCs and WPA conferences.

9. I am generalizing here about the majority of writing programs, based on published scholarship, queries posted to the electronic discussion list for writ-

ing program administrators, WPA-L, and my active participation in the WPA organization. Some writing programs are clearly already in the process of integrating new media composing into required composition courses. See especially Michigan Tech's "Revisions" course, described by Lynch and Wysocki; Stanford's PWR 2 course, described by Marvin Diogenes and Andrea Lunsford in "Toward Delivering New Definitions of Writing. Both Purdue University <<http://www.digitalparlor.org/icap/>> and Ohio State University <<http://english.osu.edu/programs/firstyearwriting/>> have also recently moved to include new media writing as an important feature of their required composition courses. The tides may be turning, but these programs are still seen as the exception rather than the norm.

10. See for example Patricia Freitag Ericsson and Richard Haswell, eds., *Machine Scoring of Student Essays: Truth and Consequences*. Utah State UP 2006)

11. These eight conditions include 1) "a significant amount of dissatisfaction with the status quo," 2) "those who are centrally involved must have the requisite knowledge and skills needed to get the job done," 3) "sufficient resources must be made available to support the change initiatives," 4) "sufficient time must be made available for exploration and innovation," 5) "incentives must exist for the participants involved in change initiatives," 6) "broad-based participation must be expected and encouraged," 7) "There must be a high level of commitment on the part of key stakeholders," and 8) "strong leadership must be evident." (226–27)

12. One such exigence is the need for funding to enable the kind of remediation I'm arguing for here. At the time this text goes to press, "The Future Is Now: Presentation to the Rutgers University Board of Governors," a video presented by Richard E. Miller arguing for funding just such a remediation of his own Department of English, is available on YouTube at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z65V2yK0XxM>>. Miller uses a new media composition to argue for the importance (and funding) of new media composition.

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