

## From the Editors

I'm doing a study on expert readers, related to my other work on reading. But the study involves participants who happen to be members of the editorial board of this journal. Their responses to a set of survey questions completed as part of my study offer some interesting insights to how the articles that appear in the journal come to publication, so I thought I would share. My findings should be of interest to readers of this journal, to those whose work has been published here, and to those who might submit articles for possible publication.

My participants are a structured sample of six editorial board members who vary in age, background, part of the country and other factors. The IRB at my institution reviewed and approved the study. It entails a survey completed online and a semi-structured 30 minute recorded interview on reading and review practices. Each participant received (with author permission) a few articles reviewed previously and the comments s/he provided on those articles and was asked to review these prior reviews as the basis for the discussion.

Our reviewers treat all the articles with care and attention, spending at least an hour on each review. There are three key insights that derive from the data I've collected. First, reviewers pay close attention to the audience and author purpose in each piece they read. They try to envision the typical WPA journal subscriber citing in the interviews such issues as "could someone use this Monday morning?" and how useful would this piece be to me or to a reader with more or less experience in WPA work? And our editorial board reviewers try to figure out what the author's purpose is in writing the article. If the author's purpose isn't as clear as it should be, our reviewers will make a point of mentioning this fact in their responses.

A second insight that arises from the data is that the editorial board pays attention to the context of the topic in the field. We (the editors, Debra Dew and I) send articles to reviewers based on our assessment of the topic and our list of their areas of expertise, working for a match, so that the reviewers have the appropriate background to assess the article fairly. Thus, when reviewers respond to submissions, they are drawing on their own

knowledge of the field as well as their own research and experience. The relative importance of the topic and its usefulness are important points in their evaluation of articles.

Finally, our reviewers look at the overall structure and organization of each article they review. They examine the literature review if there is one. Closely related, of course, is an assessment of the methodology used by the writer. In their evaluation, they consider whether the claims made are reasonable and appropriate given the data that have been presented to support them. Such material may arise from large or small empirical studies, case studies, program reviews, narratives, or from other sources.

As our readers then, you should find the articles in this and all our issues to be exemplars of these standards the editorial board uses in its reviews: usefulness and appropriateness for WPAs, suitable discussion of the topic given the field as a whole, and strong, clear writing that includes a solid literature review, appropriate methodology and reasonable conclusions that arise from the data or sources used.

These principles appear in practice in this issue. Faye Halpern's "The Preceptor Problem" is an autobiographical account that describes how her experience as a preceptor at Harvard's Expository Writing Program ("Expos") shaped her work. While freedom from disciplinarity has strong appeal, a preceptor's life post Expos brings disciplinary expectations back into clear relief.

In "Students in the First-Year ESL Writing Program: Revisiting the Notion of 'Traditional' ESL," Elena Lawrick offers an exhaustive profile of international ESL students at her doctoral granting institution, Purdue University. Her study challenges the prevailing perception of international undergraduates as a homogeneous group of English language learners with limited experience in the authentic use of English and English composition.

Mark Mullen's "Students' Rights and the Ethics of Celebration" challenges readers to consider the degree to which many of our celebratory practices involve problematic appropriations of student work for our own purposes, some of which may run counter to established professional guidelines for the teaching of writing as laid down by the CCCC.

Kendall Leon and Thomas Sura's article describes an alternative approach to service learning pedagogy, shifting the rhetorical focus of service learning writing from producing texts for public audiences on behalf of a community partner to documenting the organization's writing processes. They argue that the resulting "engagement portfolios" can create a more sustainable partnership between writing classes and community organizations.

In “Using Systems Thinking to Transform Writing Programs,” Dan Melzer argues that Critical Systems Thinking is a useful methodology to understand, critique, and transform campus writing programs. He uses the example of transformations to his own institution’s campus writing program to illustrate the systems methodology and gives advice for applying the methodology to campus writing programs across institutional contexts.

In “Negotiating Expertise: A Pedagogical Framework for Cross-curricular Literacy Work,” Sandra Tarabochia argues for a reconfiguration of cross-curricular faculty teaching relationships, which focuses on the interpersonal dimensions that often constrain successful negotiation among co-teaching colleagues.

Chris M. Anson reviews Peter Elbow’s *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* in a lively essay - “A Word for Peter” - that combines speech-like strategies owing largely to the ideas of the book.

In “Feminist WPA Work: Beyond Oxymorons,” Laura Micciche and Donna Strickland review *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly. Placing this new volume in the context of previous work on feminism and WPA work, Micciche and Strickland analyze the various ways the field has achieved, and in some cases has not, goals set for feminist administrative approaches over the last few decades.

Chris Thaiss reviews two edited collections that reflect on the influences of two “heroes” in writing studies: Edward White and Stephen North, respectively. Thaiss argues that, to varying degrees, the essays in both books do more than just celebrate the past: collectively, they provide a snapshot of the diversity of current perspectives and suggest future directions for WPA work in all its many forms.

