

Introduction to Volume 19, Issue 3/4

Michael J. Cripps, University of New England

As we end of our third year of life amid COVID, we can see that supply chains are not the only things that are healing. More professional organizations are returning to in-person conferences, albeit tentatively and often with online options. We see these moves with the 2023 Conference on College Composition and Communication, for example, as well as with the International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference this coming summer. Most colleges and universities have returned to some version of pre-pandemic normalcy, at least in terms of face-to-face classes, the elimination of mask mandates, and cohorted or hy-flex instruction. Some of our colleagues—particularly those with small children, eldercare responsibilities, or compromised immune systems—remain masked, as do some of our students. I cannot help but think that mask optional is becoming part of the “new normal.”

At the same time, K-12 and university educators alike are struggling to adapt to the very real challenges of educating young people whose learning experiences were substantially disrupted by remote learning. In the US, educators’ felt sense of the disruption is reflected in 2022 standardized test scores reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the so-called “nation’s report card.” Since just the last administration in 2019, young people’s math and reading scores have dropped to levels not seen in more than two decades. Educators will struggle to help students make up that ground. My lived experience as a faculty member who teaches mostly first-year students is that our high school graduates know they did not learn a lot through the pandemic. They report not studying much (if at all), having fewer deadlines on assignments, and coasting. The transition to college is a challenge for almost all. But there is no denying it: We are experiencing something very different. I am talking with colleagues about our need to be open to reimagining what we used to take as the starting point or basic expectation for college-level work—and college-level work habits—if we remain committed to supporting student success in the college transition. I imagine those hard conversations are happening across the country—and across the globe.

Given the magnitude of this challenge, I want to emphasize that *ATD* welcomes submissions that report on research into pedagogies and practices that might help faculty—and the field—make this transition. I think we are seeing early indicators that this research is in the pipeline, as we have received, reviewed, and even published articles that report on pandemic-inflected approaches to faculty development. Last year, for example, we published “Making WAC Accessible: Reimagining the WAC Faculty Workshop as an Online Asynchronous Course,” by Amy Mecklenburg-Faenger, Brandi Handley, & Emily Donnelly-Sallee. I am confident that faculty are quite busy reworking their pedagogies, as I know that I am. Next steps will involve more systematic study of the impact of those changes and, hopefully, reporting of results.

This double issue of *Across the Disciplines* features five articles. While each contribution represents work that stands alone, there is considerable value in considering some of the ways they intersect or hang together. Two contributions engage specifically with affective dimensions in writing and writing instruction, and a third touches on issues that will be of interest to those curious about affect and writing. For those readers, I recommend reading Callow and Dykema’s (2022), Johnson and

Across the Disciplines

A Journal of Language, Learning and Academic Writing
10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.01

wac.colostate.edu/atd

ISSN 554-8244

Across the Disciplines is an open-access, peer-reviewed scholarly journal published on the WAC Clearinghouse and supported by [Colorado State University](http://colorado.edu) and [Georgia Southern University](http://georgia.edu). Articles are published under a [Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs) ISSN 1554-8244. Copyright © 1997-2022 The WAC Clearinghouse and/or the site’s authors, developers, and contributors. Some material is used with permission.

Rifenburg's (2022), and LaFollette's contributions. Three articles explore the importance of audience in writing: Johnson and Rifenburg; Fisher et al. (2022); and Tatu et al. (2022). Four of the articles in the issue engage in some way with STEM, through either the lens of student learning or writing instruction, or both. Where Fisher et al., Tatu et al., and Johnson and Rifenburg focus more attention on undergraduate writers in science or math, Callow and Dykema study instructors who teach science writing. And two contributions—Fisher et al. and Johnson and Rifenburg—add to our understanding of “meaningful writing” in the sense that Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Lerner (2016) mean it.

We are pleased to also feature four excellent reviews. Gabriella Wilson (2022) reviews Lisa Blankenship's (2019) *Changing the Subject: A Theory of Rhetorical Empathy* and suggests ways that Blankenship's work might be applied in a WAC/WID context. Analeigh E. Horton (2022), in her review of *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 4* (2022) takes care to explore ways that a resource principally aimed at a student audience also offers a rich set of tools for instructors. Angel Evans' (2022) review of *Literacy as Conversation: Learning Networks in Urban and Rural Communities* (2020), by Eli Goldblatt and David A. Joliffe, emphasizes the ways the authors' textured approach helps to foreground the importance of geography and networks in what becomes a nuanced treatment of literacy. Lastly, Morgan D. Beers (2022) reviews Stacey Pigg's (2020) *Transient Literacies in Action: Composing with the Mobile Surround*, a study of the ways that the mobility of networked devices has given rise to new sets of reading and writing practices.

In our first article, Kristin LaFollette (2022), explores a first-year writing pedagogy that she calls transgenre composing. For her, transgenre composing works at the intersection of art and writing to emphasize the ways that composing is an embodied process and experience. LaFollette's contribution poses a challenge to the traditional separation of mind from body through its engagement with the rhetoric of health and medicine. In significant ways, the pedagogy's connection to the rhetoric of health and medicine opens up possibilities for applying transgenre composing to assignments relevant in a variety of academic fields ranging from pre-medicine and nursing to psychology and sociology. Notably, the essay is itself a transgenre composition that invites readers to reflect on the intersection of writing and art.

Our second article, by Rick Fisher, Amanda C. DeDiego, Kathryn E. Cooper, Kathleen Frye, and Michele D. Larson (2022), reports results from a study in which students in courses from a range of disciplines had the option to write for one of three audiences: the instructor, a novice, or an expert in an adjacent field. Drawing from Dan Melzer's (2014) reworking of James Britton's (1975) classic audience categories, the authors used a combination of Likert and open-ended questions to better understand why students might value writing for different audiences, their reasons for choosing to write for one audience over another, and their engagement with the assignments. As their title forecasts, Fisher et al. find that a plurality of students chose to write for the instructor because they were more familiar with those kinds of writing situations in school. In important ways, the paper reinforces a point made by Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neil Lerner (2016): meaningful writing tasks balance flexibility and constraint. Somewhat surprisingly, the authors also report that students who chose to write for the instructor viewed it as a kind of writing-to-learn activity.

Kristen Johnson and Michael Rifenburg, in our third contribution to the issue, report findings from a “diary study” of undergraduates engaged in capstone research in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Noting that undergraduate research has long been recognized as a high-impact educational practice, the authors note a pronounced gap in the literature on undergraduate research—student voices—and offer valuable insights into the ways that students' conceptions of themselves and their work develop over the course of their projects. Their article sheds additional light on the reasons the undergraduate research project is meaningful in the sense that Eodice et al. (2016) mean it. Students' diary entries revealed four key themes—exigence, ethos, audience, and

feeling—that Johnson and Rifenburg carefully unpack by contextualizing selected projects and rich excerpts from the entries. Exigence, it turns out, was the dominant theme, as students worked hard to find a purpose that could motivate them and contribute to a relevant scholarly community. An especially noteworthy component of this article is the decision to include the affective dimension alongside the rhetorical elements. The study documents emotional highs and lows as the undergraduate researchers struggle to discover a purpose, embrace the researcher identity, and locate a relevant audience that could provide a purpose for the work.

In our fourth contribution, “Abstract Algebra and the Conversation of Mankind,” J. Christian Tatu, Thomas Yuster, Elizabeth McMahon, and Samantha Miller-Brown (2022) share research into peer tutoring for written proofs in advanced mathematics and the enculturation of undergraduate math students into elements of math discourse. The authors frame their project with Kenneth Bruffee’s (1984) concept of normal discourse and explain how their peer-tutoring model and curriculum work in tandem to introduce students to key threshold concepts in abstract algebra. The article will undoubtedly be of interest to those in WID working with mathematics faculty. I expect the contribution will also be of interest to those working in writing or tutoring centers because the details of the model speak to important matters in these communities. Tatu et al. describe an approach in which tutors possess the relevant content knowledge but do not work as math tutors. Instead, their main focus in tutoring is on the genre of mathematical proofs.

Megan Callow and Julie Dykema, in our last article in the issue, report on the ways that instructors’ writing experiences, disciplinary backgrounds, and personalities affect their teaching practices within a linked writing course model in a disciplinary writing program. The authors’ focus is on instructors who deliver the science writing course in that linkage. Drawing on the scholarship suggesting that teacher identity is positional and a semi-structured interview methodology, they detail ways that instructors’ backgrounds impact a number of key elements of teaching practice. Disciplinary training informed instructors’ learning goals, including the value they placed on scientific accuracy, writing process, and more. Mentors, not surprisingly, surfaced as a key influence on instructors’ approaches, as did their own literacy experiences. Callow and Dykema also explore in depth another perhaps unsurprising finding: instructors’ disciplinary expertise affected their level of confidence in teaching science writing in the program. Their discussion of this result exposes the ways that nonexpert status can be an asset, as it can enable the student to be positioned as an expert of sorts. The study may be highly localized, but the authors conclude by offering a short list of ways their findings could inform approaches at other institutions.

As I reflect on the articles in this issue, particularly in relation to our most recent special issue on STEM and WAC, I am struck by the ways that WAC is rippling through STEM. When we launched that issue’s CFP soon after the postponement of the International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference in summer 2020, we did so because our analysis of the conference program suggested an uptick of research in that area. We assembled a team of guest editors who shepherded a double issue through a pandemic and to publication. The interest in STEM, it turns out, is more than an uptick. Beyond the STEM-centric articles in the current issue, we have a number of STEM-focused manuscripts in various stages of the review process, suggesting that a great deal of WAC work is happening in post-secondary math and science programs.

We are making excellent progress on our next special issue, “ePortfolios in the Disciplines,” guest edited by Chris Basgier, Helen Chen, and Amy Cicchino. Review of manuscripts is under way, with publication anticipated in late 2023. We are also quite close to issuing a Call for Proposals for a special issue that seeks to bring the fields of writing studies and language studies into deeper conversation. Tentatively titled “Confluences of Writing Studies and the History of the English Language” and guest edited by Chris C. Palmer, Jennifer Sladek, and Jennifer C. Stone, we anticipate a formal invitation for proposals will go out in early 2023, with publication planned for late 2024. I encourage scholars

whose work is relevant to the mission of *ATD* to consider sending manuscripts our way. And, as always, we are open to conversations with individuals seeking to propose a themed special issue of the journal.

References

- Beers, Morgan D. (2022, December 30). [Review of the book *Transient literacies in action: Composing with the mobile surround*, by Stacey Pigg]. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 294-297. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.10>
- Blankenship, Lisa. (2019). *Changing the subject: A theory of rhetorical empathy*. Utah State University Press.
- Britton, James. (1975). *The development of writing abilities (11-18)*. Macmillan.
- Bruffee, Kenneth. (1984). Collaborative learning and the "conversation of mankind." *College English*, 46(7), 635-52.
- Callow, Megan, & Dykema, Julie. (2022, December 30). An astronomer out of water: How disciplinary background shapes instructors' approaches to science writing instruction. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 258-277. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.06>
- Driscoll, Dana Lynn, Heise, Megan, Stewart, Mary K., & Vetter, Matthew (Eds.). (2022). *Writing spaces: Readings on writing, Volume 4*. Parlor Press.
- Eodice, Michele, Geller, Anne Ellen, & Lerner, Neal. (2016). *The meaningful writing project: Learning, teaching, and writing in higher education*. Utah State University Press.
- Evans, Angel. (2022, December 30). [Review of the book *Literacy as conversation*, by Eli Goldblatt and David A. Joliffe]. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 290-293. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.09>
- Fisher, Derek, DeDiego, Amanda C., Cooper, Kathryn E., Frye, Kathleen, Larson, Michele D., & Duball, Chelsea. (2022, December 30). This is the type of audience I've learned to write to my whole life: Exploring student perspectives about writing for different types of audiences. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 198-224. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.03>
- Goldblatt, Eli, & Joliffe, David A. (2020). *Literacy as conversation*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Horton, Analeigh E. (2022, December 30). [Review of the book *Writing spaces: Readings on writing, Volume 4*, edited by Dana Lynn Driscoll, Megan Heise, Mary K. Stewart, & Matthew Vetter]. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 284-289. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.08>
- Johnson, Kristine, & Rifenberg, J. Michael. (2022, December 30). Rhetoric and affect in undergraduate research: A diary study. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 225-242. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.04>
- LaFollette, Kristin. (2022, December 30). Exploring embodiment through rhetoric of health and medicine: An arts-based, transgenre pedagogy. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 180-197. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.02>
- Mecklenburg-Faenger, Amy, Handley, Brandi, & Donnelly-Sallee, Emily. (2022, February 18). Making WAC accessible: Reimagining the WAC faculty workshop as an online asynchronous course. *Across the Disciplines*, 18(3/4), 244-264. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.18.3-4.03>
- Melzer, Dan. (2014). *Assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing*. Utah State University Press.
- Pigg, Stacey. (2020). *Transient literacies in action: Composing with the mobile surround*. The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Tatu, J. Christian, Yuster, Thomas R., McMahon, Elizabeth, & Miller-Brown, Samantha. (2022, December 30). Abstract algebra and the conversation of mankind. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 243-257. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2022.19.3-4.06>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *The nation's report card: NAEP*. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

Wilson, Gabriella. (2022, December 30). [Review of the book *Changing the subject: A theory of rhetorical empathy*, by Lisa Blankenship]. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 278-283. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-I.2022.19.3-4.07>

Contact Information

Michael J. Cripps, Ph.D.
University of New England
Email: mcripps@une.edu

Complete APA Citation

Cripps, Michael J. (2022, December 30). Introduction to Volume 19, Issue 3/4. *Across the Disciplines*, 19(3/4), 175-179. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-I.2022.19.3-4.01>