

## Chapter 25. Editing as Writing and Developing Writing: Understanding What Others are Doing in Their Writing

As I was developing my own teaching, research, and theory program, I started to become more conscious of how I could contribute to the growth of the field as a whole, beyond my personal publications. Initially I thought simply that my work would only thrive if there were people doing similar work, which I therefore wanted to foster. But as I became more aware and thoughtful about the value of different lines of work, and as I was able to view writing studies through more of a science studies lens, I saw that the field as a whole needed to thrive and become more robust in order for us all to contribute to the advancement of writing practices and writing education. Science studies also made me more aware of some of the intellectual and institutional tools needed to support a thriving discipline. In turn, I found my own work deepening as I was able to gain a more sympathetic understanding of other people's research programs.

These developments were happening as I continued my own work. So the remaining chapters of this book create a bit more complex chronology, with some parts overlapping in time with earlier chapters, and then going forward with multiple streams of engagement happening simultaneously. As I moved into the later parts of my writing career, I also started to look more to the future of the field to support possible lines of work that might endure in the work of others.

An important step in this communal engagement was taking on editorial roles which stretched across several decades and into the present. Elsewhere I have written on my editorial work as part of my contribution to the field and have drawn some lessons as to how to edit most effectively (Bazerman, 2022c). In editing, moreover, I was also developing my own skills of writing. I was learning to work collaboratively with others and help them build the strongest texts they could. By evaluating their texts, seeing how the texts were constructed, and spotting the as yet unrealized potentials in their texts, I was learning to appreciate different ways of going about and representing research. I had to stretch my mind to look down the paths the authors were taking.

A good friend from college, Gabor Brogyanyi, the graduate student who helped introduce me to the mysteries of *explication du texte*, died from AIDS during the early years of that disease when he was a professor at Bowdoin. While we had been roommates when he was a graduate student and I was a first-year undergraduate, he never let on about his being gay or his struggles with it, and I was too naive to pick up on the clues. As part of his memorial, I volunteered to edit a small, privately published collection of his poems, only a few of which had previously been published. In reading through his manuscripts twenty years after

we were roommates, I started to feel his struggles, his pain, and the sadness of his early passing. This experience, while not a complicated technical matter, nonetheless, opened me to the way editing brings one closer to the vision, thoughts, and experience of authors.

## Developmental Editing of Academic Collections and Series

My first small steps in scholarly editing grew out of some conference panels I organized in the late 1980s that then became special sections in two journals. I had come to see, as many academics do, the value of organizing panels to bring together several scholars with related work to share thoughts. Bringing their papers together for a journal section is a common next step. Negotiating with journal editors, coordinating schedules and drafts, and monitoring length requirements were good training in managing projects. The actual writing of introductions grew directly from my chair's role in the panels, offering some context and synthesis while adopting an editor's voice (Bazerman 1989c, 1989d).

A more extensive volume co-edited with Jim Paradis (Bazerman & Paradis, 1991e) grew out of a chance conference chat about our shared desire to see more careful and systematic use of evidence in historical studies of scientific writing and the need to shift rhetorical attention from canonized texts to actual practices. While rhetorical teaching embodied in canonical texts may influence the actual practices of any period, it was not necessarily a one-way flow from theory to practice as was too often represented.

Both of us as writers had previously attempted to enlist our readers, but we now had to enlist other authors, so that they could see their work fitting within our potential volume. To ground the work in actual historical writing practices we set explicit criteria for proposals on the kind of systematic evidence required; these criteria then influenced our selection of projects to invite for full manuscripts. In dividing up which editor would primarily work with each author (though we both periodically looked at all the developing chapters), we became more explicit about work we felt comfortable mentoring and those that seemed to fit the other's expertise. Jim and I acted as editors on each other's work, which stretched us both in appreciating each other's intellectual world. In working with the chapter authors we also came to identify what we saw as promising in the evidence they offered but had not yet framed well. All of the proposals we chose already had interesting in-depth research materials, so the developmental work was about what the authors could do with this material, how to identify and bring out the main story of each study, and find the bigger meaning within the rich particularities of their data. As I had come to ask, they had evidence of something, but of what? We also guided authors into more explicit and careful representation of their theories, methods, and evidence. This process is no doubt similar to what

other editors experience and learn, but for us, of course, it was new. All this inspection and evaluation of the authors' work further raised our awareness of our own methodological standards and practices.

Jim and I turned out to have somewhat different editing goals. While we were both committed to the emergence of social forms and their elaboration, I expected more positioning within prior theory, while Jim was more looking with an historian's eye focusing on actors and their local conditions. This difference impacted the way we worked with authors, as I kept up dialog with my authors to get more systematic with their theories and their analytical methods, while Jim focused on evidence from archival research. At one point he wondered why the chapters I was mentoring kept constructing preliminary reviews of literature, often out of a similar body of articles, but then at some point he said he now understood that there was an interrelated set of studies here, advancing a common vision. All the authors in my side did share that orientation, but it took some dialog to elicit the theories they were working with. At the same time, I had a bit of trouble in understanding where some of Jim's articles were going, which then led me to query him and his authors about making the important themes more explicit. In turn, Jim's influence made my own chapter on Joseph Priestley more historically focused on a single author and how the author's way of thinking and writing emerged out of his social conditions, identities, and projects.

Editing another person's work requires you to read it carefully. Even more, when editing it developmentally, you view the work at several stages, try to see where it is headed, and suggest ways to help the text emerge. You get to know the text as you try to align with the thinking and material of the author. In particular, I looked at the reasoning, sequencing, and elaboration of arguments to see their warrantability and readability, so that readers would follow and assent to the text's reasoning. This task led me to question my own sense of what made a credible argument, what was needed to fulfill the claims, what would distract, and what would make visible and more memorable the meaning and import of the claims. While I had thought about these issues in my own writing, grappling with the work of others forced me to take on problems and paths of reasoning I would be unlikely to have gone down on my own.

In my editing, I tried to reflect back to authors what I was finding in their texts and then ask whether that matched their intentions. Then I asked questions to elicit more about what I saw as needing elaboration and to query whether some parts were essential, and for what purpose. Only then would I make suggestions about how things might be phrased more sharply, what topics might be gone through more swiftly or avoided because they raised distracting questions, or what should just be eliminated as not necessary—though often all these issues would be resolved in the prior questioning. But I found it most enlightening when authors wanted to go in different directions or otherwise pushed back at my suggestions, indicating that I was missing what they were trying to say—perhaps

because I was relying on inappropriate assumptions or perhaps because I was just misreading or being dense.

Conversations were particularly intense in the early stages of development of the chapters, as I met with authors at conferences in the middle of noisy coffee shops and hotel lobbies. I kept trying to wrap my mind around what they had and where they were going, and then ask questions and make suggestions in harmony with what I was understanding. I regularly reminded myself and the authors, however, that this was their text and final choices always remained with them. As they made their arguments, assumptions, and methods more explicit, I was also able to align better with where they were headed. This process created a kind of unity in the volume that extended beyond the initial vision, but still realized our original intention to create space for individuals to research the actual social practices of writing in different times and places.

## Co-editing with David Russell

I then co-edited several books and special issues with David Russell. Since we had been having a continuing dialog on our research and growing theoretical ideas for several years before collaborating, we started out more closely aligned. When I read a draft of David's volume on the history of Writing Across the Curriculum (Russell, 1991), I was excited by what he had found and our conversations over the manuscript led to a strong collaborative trust. Our first collaborative project to elaborate our shared vision of WAC was a volume of *Landmark Essays in Writing Across the Curriculum* (Bazerman & Russell, 1994e). In our discussions of what texts to include, we set out a vision of the historical trend of the field and its current manifestations. Research about actual disciplinary practices we saw as important to inform the curricular, institutional, and faculty development components of WAC. These impulses as well guided us in preparing the headnotes of the selected landmark essays. The trajectory and implications of our approach contested some of then-current approaches to writing and rhetoric, as in two introductory essays we challenged assumptions of rhetorical theory and approaches to WAC that did not engage sufficiently with the variety of disciplinary writing. As I had discussed earlier in this book, I had mixed experiences in challenging views, but in this case David and I came to the conclusion that it was necessary here to define the space we were marking out in contrast to other approaches that already had claimed a lot of the turf.

David and I then wanted to create a publication space and shared identity for a growing group of scholars interested in following similar lines of investigation. We proposed a co-edited special issue on writing for an interdisciplinary journal *Mind, Culture, and Activity* devoted to activity theory, which we were drawn to as providing a more comprehensive framework within which to locate genre (Russell & Bazerman, 1997i). Our call for proposed papers articulated that theoretical commitment to understanding the relation of activity to writing practices.

The process of developmental editing was similar to that in the earlier volume with Jim Paradis, but since the theoretical orientation was already more tightly focused, we were able to help each other see further down our distinct but closely related paths.

A few years later David and I followed up that special issue of five articles with a longer volume of fourteen new chapters, with an even greater focus on the emergent nature of work, communities, and individuals engaged in writing activities (Bazerman & Russell, 2003g). My own development as an editor and writer continued as I came to know more about the ways the authors' minds and writing practices worked to produce their separate contributions. The more I worked with authors, the more I could make suggestions that would support the paths they were going down. I came to see that they would go farthest by following their own lights; whatever I had to offer needed to fit with where they were heading. The important thing for the volume's coherence was that the chapters would remain in dialog whether they explicitly disagreed on significant points or simply looked at different material and phenomena. This awareness of the distinctiveness of each chapter also increased my own understanding of the capaciousness and inventiveness of writing and the great differences among writers and their paths of development.

Simultaneously with these collections, I became the sole editor of a book series with Erlbaum on the related theme of *Rhetoric, Society, and Knowledge*, explicitly inquiring into how socially organized activities produced, distributed, and applied knowledge within society. Again, the series supported the growth of a body of work and a group of researchers who would keep expanding the general approach and demonstrating its wide reach and implications for society. Each study was particular and detailed in its methods, data, and evidence. Working with authors as their books emerged over time from proposals through drafts and publication, I was able to appreciate more fully the contribution of each, what they were seeing, and the tools that they were to bring to bear. Since many of the authors themselves were writing teachers my editing could draw on common practical knowledge we shared. Often I just needed to remind them about something they regularly did with their students in order to apply it to themselves. Sometimes we do not remember that we ourselves are the same as our students, with the same problems they have. Once I reminded authors to get back to basics we all knew and preached, they would say, "of course" and would do all the rest of the work on their own with no further commentary needed from me. It was delightful to see how familiar principles would ramify in much improved texts. Often enough when we also discussed some new, more subtle issue at a more advanced level that might not come up with their students, the authors would quickly know exactly what to do, pursuing the work in their own way. This certainly heightened my appreciation of how much craft knowledge writing teachers develop, as well as the value of knowing what you wanted to accomplish in revision.

Working with authors in depth over their projects (some of them repeatedly) built friendships and gave me an ongoing interest in where their work was headed. I felt I had become a better reader of their new work, though I was regularly surprised by new steps they were taking.

## Editing Reference Works

As writing studies expanded, reference works were needed to make the field's findings more available. Although knowledge in our field had been growing for decades, it was not accessible—too many wheels were being reinvented without awareness of prior work. When a colleague approached me to co-edit a series of reference guides on rhetoric and composition, I accepted quickly. Even after the print publisher stepped back from their commitment and the initiating editor also dropped out, I persisted and sought open access publishing with the WAC Clearinghouse in conjunction with print-on-demand editions from Parlor Press.

The initial plan for the volumes was tightly templated to ensure focused reference coverage distinct from the author's personal research program or argument. The volumes needed to be accessible to teachers of writing working with all ages and levels, as well as other writing practitioners and policy makers. The early volumes, however, revealed authors needed some flexibility, so the sections became functions that needed to be addressed rather than mandated chapters. The reference stance and the broad review of history, theory, research, current directions, and implications for practice, however, remained.

I recruited broadly among experts in the field, often from people with different interests and perspectives than my own because I wanted to ensure that all aspects of the field were being covered. When the series first started, the paucity of reference works meant many topics needed to be covered, though the volumes would appear only gradually. Over the years other books reviewing research and practice appeared, so the need to cover all topics lessened; nonetheless, the series remained open to all areas of the field, especially if they have not yet gotten good synoptic coverage. A few years ago, I invited a couple of younger co-editors (Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff) to open the series to more recent developments and allow continuity. Anis and Mary Jo had produced the excellent reference guide on *Genre* with efficiency and professionalism, showing real understanding of the purpose of the series, so I knew they could carry through in editing further volumes. It turns out that they had marvelous insights and expertise which I learned from, and that together as a team we have readily converged on judgments that were more thoughtful than would have come from any one of us as individuals.

While this series started to provide reviews of work in specific areas with an emphasis on the application to practice, in the early years of the twenty-first century writing studies still didn't have a general research handbook or encyclopedia that would bring together in one volume all the different lines of work and could provide the foundation for continuing research and theorizing. I proposed such

a volume to Erlbaum and began working with an editor, Naomi Silverman, who continued to work with me even as Erlbaum was purchased by Francis and Taylor, shortly thereafter to be acquired by Routledge. Despite the changes of ownership, I felt no disruption of the kind of personal support and flexibility granted initially by the small publisher. I also was given a slow timeline that allowed gradual building of the contents with lots of consultation and giving the authors adequate time to prepare in-depth chapters, with multiple cycles of revision. As the book was in the latter stages, I found out about another handbook that would be coming out somewhat earlier, edited by MacArthur, Graham, and Harris (2006), with a more limited focus on schooling and educational psychological approaches. I resisted speeding up my timeline, but rather let the book cook slowly as it needed. There was also another reference work on a similar timeline focused on composition and the classroom edited by Peter Smagorinsky (2006). When my book came out (Bazerman, 2008b), I saw the three books as complementary; I built an alliance with the other editors in shared conference presentations and other communications. My relationship and friendship with each of them grew and we were to work together in various ways over the ensuing years.

My proposal was from the beginning based on the multidimensionality and interdisciplinarity of writing studies. I needed to reach out to different fields for chapter ideas and authors. To realize the broadness of this vision I relied on a large board of advisors with recognized expertise in the many domains that needed to be covered. I solicited chapter ideas from members of the board and circulated for comments an evolving table of contents built around five sections: history, society, individual, school, language. As the chapter topics emerged, I also asked the board for suggestions for potential authors. I later would use members of the board to review individual chapters in their areas of expertise. When I then invited authors for particular chapters, I offered an initial list of subtopics to be covered, asking the authors to make a counter proposal that drew on their particular expertise and vision. Of course, their suggestions showed me much more of their fields than I imagined existed. In a few cases I suggested a few additions or adjustments, most often to monitor the boundaries of the chapters and to avoid unproductive overlaps and gaps between chapters. Ultimately, I was able to find admirable and timely coverage for almost all the topics. In the introductions to the section of the published volume, I only had to suggest a few remaining interdisciplinary areas that I thought might be relevant.

Once the parameters of the chapters were established, the authors already had a good idea of the nature of the reference volume and their task, so my continuing editorial work, while detailed, was not unusual and involved, making a few organizational or style suggestions, monitoring chapter lengths, and keeping up deadline pressures, though the authors were quite professional about all these things.

The handbook further expanded my scope of understanding of the breadth, depth, and detail of the field. By the end of the project, I had a sense that I finally had a grasp on the parts of the field as they existed at the time. This then

positioned me to carry out my further projects with a much better sense of what the field contained and what I might usefully contribute to the continuing growth of the field; particularly, it gave me the confidence I needed to move forward with the pair of theory books which I described in Chapter 24. Together this handbook and the theory books fulfilled a commitment I made in my 2000 article calling for a fuller history and social accounting of writing to demonstrate its impact on our way of life, our institutions and schooling, as well as our individual ways of thinking (Bazerman, 2000c). With these two projects completed, I felt I had accomplished what I had promised and was secure in the framework I had been developing. I now had the leisure to think what to do next to carry the work forward.

## Publication Venues and Open Access

Choosing publication venues for projects is also the work of writers and editors, and requires learning how to navigate gatekeepers to reach appropriate audiences. The publishing landscape as well has changed, with two forces dominating—corporatization and the internet. Together these have led me to rely increasingly on open access publication through academically run organizations, which I now seek whenever possible.

In the early years of my career publishing textbooks and then scholarly books, a number of small academic and corporate publishers held values consistent with academic interests and were culturally close to universities. They sought quality books (by academic standards), were interested in novel approaches, and were willing to invest in projects with only modest returns or high risks. But over time corporate consolidation and public ownership have redirected publishers to assured short-term profits to maintain stock prices. The values of publishers became corporate and prices of books and journals escalated, coming increasingly in conflict with academic values, not only in what they offered but in how available their products were to people with little access to large research libraries.

The corporate hold and predatory behavior were particularly troublesome for the field of writing studies, which arose largely outside of elite research universities and whose knowledge was widely useful outside of such elite institutions. Writing professionals often worked at less well-funded or smaller institutions with teaching missions and little budget for research libraries. Further, many teachers of writing worked in less affluent nations that could not invest heavily in internationally-priced higher education materials. The situation only became worse with the arrival of the internet, which led corporate publishers to find ways to maximize their dwindling hold on the publication process. Much of the production of scholarly labor had always been dependent on the volunteer labor of academics, but now digital tools allowed even more of that work to be distributed to volunteer academic labor, with the corporate publishers focusing on marketing and controlling access rather than editorial support or even the



production and distribution of copies. As I became attuned to this increasing cultural divide between corporate publishers and academic authors and editors, I sought answers from the corporate owner of a journal I had been on the board of. The evasive and bad faith answers they gave and their increasingly predatory behavior gave me little choice but to resign from the board. Yet at the same time the internet and digital publication tools made open access publication possible, produced almost entirely by voluntary academic labor, perhaps with a few hired editorial assistants.

Initially I understood these dynamics only from the needs and processes within the United States, where the limited number of journals inhibited the growth of writing studies, and textbooks were the only effective channel for the dissemination of practices. With international experience, however, I came to see this situation inhibiting the needed advancement of writing globally, as writing was so central to citizenship, economy, and personal opportunity everywhere. Writing studies was growing in all regions, but venues were few and distribution was often regionally limited. The flow of knowledge across borders was an important dynamic for our field, allowing for contribution from scholars in all regions and diverse perspectives.

In writing studies in the US, the leader in the academically controlled, low-cost field was the WAC Clearinghouse, which provided free open access publication with creative common licenses, keeping manuscript ownership with the authors. The low per-volume costs they do have are covered by contributions and institutional sponsors, supplemented by arrangements with on-demand print publishers that offer print copies to those who want them. In recent years they have also added more international and multi-lingual titles, even as European and South American scholars have also been developing free open-access publishing venues drawing on the institutional arrangements available to them.

From the earliest entry of the Clearinghouse into open access publishing, I have supported and advocated for them (see Bazerman, Blakesley, Palmquist, & Russell, 2008e). In recent years, I have tried to have as many of my publications as possible circulated in open access through the WAC Clearinghouse or like endeavors, though at times the logic of distribution for particular works has meant seeking publication from a more traditional publisher. Even then, whenever I have had influence in the choice of publishers, I have argued for ethical, reasonable pricing along with open access distribution after a short embargo.