

Postscript: Connecting Knowledges of the Suffrage Movement, Then and Now

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The project presented in this special issue has been a collaborative inquiry, cast from preexisting networks of disciplinary, professional, and collegial connections. It has also intentionally and reflectively made possible new networks, by developing a collective of researchers studying a small archive of transatlantic suffrage cartoons from multi-/inter-/cross-disciplinary perspectives: archival theory and practices, feminist rhetorical practices, visual rhetorics, digital technologies, and transatlantic/transnational cultural practices.

Overall, participants in this project have created a network of connections between the concerns of contemporary feminist rhetorical scholarship and a set of visual materials that had not received significant critical and scholarly attention in the century since they were originally created. As a result, the shared archive—constructed and made accessible to this group of scholars by means of digital technologies—serves as a catalyst for new feminist rhetorical scholarship, challenging project participants to think differently about the means by which they brought their multiple perspectives to bear on working with archival materials, and to think reflectively and intentionally about their motives and purposes as feminist historiographers as well. Examining the ways these connections have been created in this project's microcosm of feminist rhetorical scholarship may help us to understand the means by which to help develop and sustain such scholarship on a larger scale.

Midway through our process of reviewing this special issue, I interviewed our collaborators by telephone about their involvement in the project, their reasons for participating, and what they had learned. I was interested in knowing about this because I understand networks as connections that are *worked*—connections that are consciously constructed and attentively examined. I hoped that these informal interviews would allow me to identify and articulate some aspects of networking among feminist scholars that might not otherwise be evident or made explicit in the essays themselves. What I learned from conversations with each of the contributors helped Tarez and me to know what kinds of revisions we could suggest that might advantageously draw from or contribute to their other scholarly projects, increasing the likelihood of creating additional networked connections. Two main insights emerged from their discussion of participating in the project: first, the process of drafting while also accessing one another's work creates a dynamic interrelationship between the writers, their archived/archival subjects,

their critical questions, and each other, in turn influencing how they ultimately refined their own analytic methodologies; and second, an intentionally constructed (and de-constructed) network offers a clear and viable way for junior and senior scholars to gain access to one another's work in the making.

Learning New Methodologies

When I asked what originally drew them to respond to our call for participants in a 2013 Feminisms and Rhetorics conference panel, several participants said they were drawn by the possibility of being enabled to create connections between work in which they were already engaged and the work of the project we described. They related the project's focus both to an area of feminist scholarship in which they had already worked and to an area of feminist scholarship they wanted to develop, moving from familiar ground into new areas of study. For example, Kristie S. Fleckenstein made a connection between the McCutcheon newspaper cartoons and suffrage-related postcards with which she was already familiar, and thought that working with the McCutcheon Transatlantic Suffrage Cartoons Digital Archive would align with and expand her knowledge of the visual milieu of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sarah L. Skripsky had already done scholarship on cultural change, suffrage, and the nationalist movement in Wales, working with text-heavy periodicals and examining fiction and poetry, but had done little with visuality and believed that "this project will help me grow" by developing an analytical vocabulary and theoretical understanding for working with visual materials. Oriana Gatta could see how the project would allow her to create links that would conjoin otherwise disparate research interests in cartoons, digital rhetorics, digital humanities, and rhetorical historiography, while Jaqueline McLeod Rogers saw an opportunity to use previously unfamiliar archival materials to create a new analytical lens for viewing materials with which she had already been working. She brought to the project knowledge of Canadian cartoons drawn by McCutcheon's contemporaries and wanted to explore how the concept of "transnational" could be used in examining cartoons.

Additionally, all of our contributors discussed how their participation in *networked* scholarship fit into the trajectories of their scholarly careers, which has given us some insights into the affordances and challenges of doing such work. More senior scholars were able to appreciate the way the network opened up new areas of inquiry that could sustain their interest over the long term. For example, Kristie welcomed the way her work on her essay further extended the scope of a large-scale study already underway, knowing that as a full professor she could afford for her involvement with the project to lead her into an area of study that would extend her time on a major scholarly project. Jaqueline recognized that her involvement had helped her to identify an area of study that could engage her scholarly interest over a long period. Jason Barrett-Fox, a

more junior scholar, was attracted to the project because it would align with a direction he had already set for her scholarship. McCutcheon's *Chicago Tribune* cartoons fit with Jason's choice of Chicago-based archives during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a focus for his scholarly work and expected that negotiating the digital archive would anticipate the issues that will arise for him in future work with digitized materials.

In addition to being able to identify these relationships between the focal subject areas of their other scholarship and the work of this networked archive, participants discussed how the project was expanding their analytical toolkits, mentioning analytical approaches they were learning from one another or approaches they were learning on their own in the process of working on their individual contributions. Sarah brought her skills of narrative analysis to examine the rhetorical dynamics of fiction to give cartoons a different kind of reading than they receive from art historians or visual rhetoricians; as a result of her work for the project she has a greater familiarity with cartoons and more confidence about analyzing cartoons as a visual genre. Oriana's experience with data mining and research visualization gave her a chance to test out new software as well as build her "historiography muscles" by learning more about feminist rhetorical historiography in order to develop her own analytical tools.

Some participants described how working on a shared archive with other scholars had offered new insights into doing *archival* work, specifically. Jason noted how different it was for him to work on a project where participants are intentionally sharing information and resources and insights, inviting collective examination and discussion of a shared archive, rather than protecting its "assets" or saving it for oneself to mine independently. Understanding the networked archive as a *potentially renewable and renewing resource* was transformative. He described how the awareness that he was in the process of writing history with others increased his recognition of the intertextual networks that sustain his scholarship and helped him better understand feminist historiography as an "anti-linear dialogue" rather than a narrative of arguments refuting one another in succession. In email exchanges after the interview, Jason articulated how he had struggled to alter his own definitions of history and archive, and ultimately felt that the challenge of deconstructing a networked archive was, for him, more significantly a challenge of redefining one's own ethical commitments towards "archive."

Accessing Each Others' Work

Our contributors were also drawn by personal connections that existed, or that they hoped to develop, with other project participants. For some of the early-career participants, the networked project provided an infrastructure for establishing relationships between their work and that of more established

scholars. As a recent Ph.D. and new assistant professor, Sarah recognized that this project provided an opportunity to build her scholarly relationships beyond her graduate school cohort by participating in a strategically designed network. Oriana also mentioned that, as a Ph.D. student (who successfully defended her dissertation while this special issue was in progress), she wanted to work with more established scholars in addition to faculty she had studied with in her graduate program.

Project participants also talked about the ways they drew on other contributors' knowledges and skills to inform their own work. Many of these connections are explicitly noted in cross-referencing throughout this issue, but participants described additional ways they had drawn on each other's work. Sarah explained that she drew on Tarez's and Oriana's theorizing, and thought that Oriana's perspectives on data mining could be applied to many other forms of historiographic scholarship. Jason noted that he had reviewed the account of practical archival work I wrote with Sammie Morris for *Working in the Archives* and had also drawn from Tarez's *College English* essay on archival metadata. He used Kristie's notion of "visual media ecology" and found that Sarah's work on "macroplots" created a "narrative [he] could get behind." He further mentioned that he thought the data visualizations in Oriana's work were "beautiful to look at" and suggested that there could be an "aesthetic of historiography" implied in the patterns and designs resulting from data visualization methods when they are applied to analyses of scholarly texts.

Several project participants explicitly discussed both the challenges and benefits of engaging in networked scholarship. Sarah explained that she found it difficult to decide how much to revise her arguments in light of the other participants' work. She wasn't sure how much difference to highlight and how much synthesis with others' contributions was desirable and appropriate. Because the project implied a need to acknowledge one another's contributions and differences, the expectation of collaboration seemed more rigorous, but she had a sense of a moving target because there could be an endless process of rereading and rethinking in light of others' contributions. For us, this seems to get at a core issue for scholars planning a strategically networked project. As historiographers, we have a relatively good understanding of the conventions for when and how to articulate connections between previously published scholarship and our own; but when the relevant work is being simultaneously—and to some extent reciprocally—generated with our own, we need new strategies for narrating our collective discoveries and for acknowledging our interdependencies.

Jaqueline noted that it was "invigorating" to partner with others and that seeing what they had done with the same archival materials was like "getting her bearings with a compass." Oriana observed that while networked

scholarship takes more time, having a sense of one's role in a project makes the work easier, and that working together helps in understanding the impact of one's work more immediately by developing a sense of audience. Oriana also noted that she was drawn into the project after it had begun because she could see from the FemRhet 2013 conference panels she attended that the networking was richer when everyone had each other's work to draw on, approaching common materials from multiple perspectives. She recognized that this networking had enabled a very generative conversation among all of the conference session participants.

All of the contributors mentioned that their personal knowledge of Tarez or me or both of us was important to their participation in the project. Knowing our scholarly work and having had some kind of interpersonal interaction with us gave them confidence in working with us as editors. For example, Kristie and Tarez are departmental colleagues, while Jaqueline recalled receiving helpful advice from me on a journal article submission many years ago. These existing interpersonal connections, *and the prospect of developing them further in a strategically planned collaborative project* were an incentive to their participation. The choice of a digital archive as our project focus allowed this work to occur significantly and rapidly. Because our networked historiographic processes allowed equal value and weight to be given to all perspectives surrounding an archive, and because we have chosen to look upon the archive as reciprocal and as something that we are actively expanding even while we examine it, we are able to expand the notion of "archival agent" and simulate what we see as a genuinely "feminist" project.

Can our network be sustained and built further, perhaps with the aid of internet-based platforms and other new technologies, and what might be the benefits of doing so? We are eager to discover what more we might learn about *how feminist rhetorics develop and circulate, how feminist historiographical methods can inspire their own development, and how to re/define methodologies as "feminist"* if we approach digital and digitized archival materials not as limited resources to be (exhaustively) mined but as renewable sources for intellectual energies. We invite our readers to tell us how they can imagine connecting their own scholarly projects to the network we've begun to create here.

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