

Feminist Editing: Learning to Engage through Coalitional Accountability

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Abstract: This article describes what we call a coalitional approach at the core of the open-access scholarly journal, *Literacy in Composition Studies* (LiCS) that we started over ten years ago. This coalitional orientation guided the founding and ongoing management of what was, in retrospect, a somewhat risky venture: building an independent journal from the ground up as a group of pre-tenure scholars committed to creating a nonhierarchical and collective editorial structure. In the process of developing the journal, we have strived to discover and implement processes, procedures, and practices that highlight coalitional accountability.

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Introduction

Sometimes you only realize how risky something was in hindsight. This article describes what we call a coalitional approach at the core of the open-access scholarly journal, *Literacy in Composition Studies (LiCS)*, that we started over ten years ago. This coalitional orientation guided the founding and ongoing management of what was, in retrospect, a somewhat risky venture: building an independent journal from the ground up as a group of pre-tenure scholars committed to creating a nonhierarchical and collective editorial structure. The risks here were multifold because not only were we building something new, but we were also committing to a certain level of vulnerability. This vulnerability existed on several levels, from the individual risks we took with our careers in investing time that could have been allocated to researching and publishing our own work, to creating a platform to publish the work of other scholars, to committing to a praxis that asked us to practice listening and self-reflexivity. In the process of developing the journal, we have strived to discover and implement processes, procedures, and practices that highlight coalitional accountability.

As an open-access academic journal investigating the interstices and overlaps of both literacy studies and composition studies, the work we publish speaks, and is spoken to, by a diverse range of scholars committed to forging new coalitional politics and scholarship across disciplinary lines. Yet, when we first set out to create the journal, our notions of multilateral transparency both vertically and horizontally were both nascent and emergent. In ways that echo Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford's reflection on coalition as it figures in the CWSHRC (Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition), we began *LiCS* with "a desire to move beyond the perceived patriarchal (hierarchical and competitive) structures of our disciplines and professional organizations and the masculinist practices that had long guided them" (11). The journal's editorial collective committed to a feminist ethos at its founding; this article explores how our understanding of that ethos has evolved as the journal has attempted to engage with shifting challenges through coalitional accountability.

Our feminist editing practices borrow heavily from feminist and critical pedagogy and import praxis from this theory. For instance, we adopt a stance toward editing in which we actively listen to writers, readers, reviewers, editorial board members, and the wider disciplinary community but also while intentionally "raise critical questions" about editorial processes. This practice is informed by bell hooks' description of the "feminist classroom" as a space "where students could raise critical questions about pedagogical process" (6). Using a process that takes seriously "critical questions" into consideration also means that we commit to inviting and collaboratively negotiating discomfort. bell hooks explains, "rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth" (113). This article explores the new thinking and growth

that have been catalyzed in our editorial practices through a feminist engagement with conflict and difficulty. As we continually (re)learn, to undertake feminist editing is to be always in a state of becoming; as Sara Ahmed reminds us “to become a feminist is to stay a student” (11).

In a series of four vignettes, this article will explore how the editors of *LiCS*, working in concert with authors, mentors, editors, and our readership, pursue our project of coalitional accountability as a feminist practice within the context of open-access academic publishing. As we work to expand our feminist ethic to actively pursue antiracist publishing practices and systems, we attempt to navigate the “local” specifics that work for our journal within a broader “global” critique of academic publishing systems, guided by Chandra Mohanty’s reminder that performing this navigation without “falling into colonizing or cultural relativist platitudes about difference is crucial in this intellectual and political landscape” (229). Across these reflections, we’ll detail what intersectional, coalitional approaches (Walton, Moore, and Jones 71) looked like for our editorial team when applied to journal production, circulation, exchange, and mentorship. Before sharing the vignettes, we will provide a bit of context for the journal’s initial mission, founding and guiding philosophical and ethical commitments. Then, the vignettes will proceed thusly:

Vignette One: Coalitional Modes of Production

In this first vignette, we explore how our horizontal editorial structure was conceived and implemented before highlighting how our collaborative decision-making process ensures coalitional accountability in the context of publication decisions. We also explore the editorial practices and processes we abide by in order to maintain multilateral transparency and consensus and how our processes for navigating disagreement and dissensus have evolved.

Vignette Two: Coalitional Building Through Circulation

In this second vignette, we consider *LiCS* in the context of circulation and rhetorical velocity (Ridolfo and DeVoss). Specifically, we explore how the processes of indexing and preservation ensure that the work published in the journal continues to be accountable for scholarly and non-scholarly audiences both now and in perpetuity.

Vignette Three: Sponsoring Coalition Building via Infrastructures of Exchange

In this third vignette, we consider how relational methods of exchange keep journal editors and authors engaged and accountable to each other and the collective “we” of our disciplines. Because articles published in *LiCS* straddle disciplinary, methodological, and temporal boundaries, it is essential that we sponsor infrastructure that facilitates continued exchange as an accountability mechanism, allowing for new coalitional emergences at the nexus of diverse epistemological

grounds. This vignette explores these places of convergence in the pages of *LiCS*.

Vignette Four: Mentorship & Opportunities for Coalitional Labor

In the final vignette, we explore our ongoing attempts to provide multiple mentorship opportunities to prospective authors and editors. Because we are committed to the broader democratization of academic publication, our work in developing an engaged mentorship infrastructure attempts to flatten the traditional hierarchies inherent in a mentorship arrangement in the hopes that coalition building and transparency can flow both ways across a mentor-mentee relationship. Further, to safeguard against presentism and provide contextualization of ongoing concerns across the fields in which we publish, we also implement a vertical mentorship infrastructure by relying on the expertise and knowledge of senior scholars in the field. We believe this close relationship among the editors and the editorial board facilitates collective accountability for the work that we publish.

Context

LiCS published its first issue in March 2013; this publication date represented two years' work among the Editorial Team in conceptualizing the journal and assembling the Editorial Board and a panel of Editorial Associates. The inaugural issue consisted of a roundtable discussion among Editorial Board members engaging various concepts, controversies, and conversations in the fields of literacy studies and composition. Since that first issue, *LiCS* has published over 100 articles, symposium contributions, interviews, and book reviews spread across 10 volumes. During that time, three of the five founding editors—Brenda Glascott, Chris Warnick, and Tara Lockhart—are still actively running the journal. Holly Middleton and Richard Parent were also founding editors. Justin Lewis joined as Layout and Design Editor in 2012 and Juli Parrish joined as Senior Copyeditor in 2013. More recently, Kara Poe Alexander joined as Submissions Editor in 2020, Helen Sandoval joined as Book Review Editor in 2020, and Al Harahap joined as Editor in 2023. Our new members have been integral to all Editorial Team decision-making, and we're lucky to have them aboard to share their ideas and the labor of publishing the journal.

Since its founding, *LiCS* was designed to provide a different approach from that offered by conventional journals in Writing Studies. From a disciplinary perspective, the editors of *LiCS* noticed a marked lack of scholarship that bridged the fields of literacy studies and composition studies. Literacy Studies is both international and multidisciplinary, with scholars from humanities and social sciences worldwide contributing to a global conversation. Composition Studies, on the other hand, is more rooted in a U.S. context although scholars borrow methods from both the humanities and social sciences. Since the fields have significantly overlapping areas, we were interested in seeing greater exchange between the scholars in these fields and greater cross-pollination of methods, theories, and pedagogies. As such, *LiCS* was created to sponsor scholarly activity at the

nexus of both fields to invite critical uptakes of writing as contextually-bound and ideologically-motivated sociocultural activity. This stance privileges multiple readings and complex, multitudinous meaning-making in any given literacy act, including our own editorial reading process. From an access perspective, *LiCS* wanted to follow other journals like *Kairos* and *Composition Forum* by providing scholarship that is born digital, online, free of cost, and free of copyright and licensing restrictions (“Open Access Overview”). To support this mission, and to encourage uptake and circulation of journal content, the editors decided, early on in the planning process, to publish articles under the CC-NC-ND license and to pursue as many indexing and cross-referencing opportunities as possible. From an editorial perspective, *LiCS* editors have eschewed a traditional vertical editorial structure in the interest of a feminist-informed, horizontal framework that encourages consensus but isn’t necessarily bound by universal agreement. This feminist-informed editing praxis is joined to a commitment to open access publishing that determines our approach to the creation, production, and circulation of scholarship.

Vignette One: Coalitional Modes of Production

Composition studies has recognized the value of collaboration, particularly as a goal for our students. We are also a discipline that often characterizes itself as valuing professional collaborations and collaborative scholarship, although—depending on the politics and tenure and promotion requirements at varying institutions—collaborative writing can still be a tenuous undertaking. When we first talked about starting this journal, we embraced a goal that is radically collaborative and aspired toward operating as a collective: the founding five editors decided to work as what we called an Editorial Collective. This original language was purposeful: marking the absence of a hierarchy and the distribution of decision making among the collective in its entirety. Our goal in decision making was consensus, for the collective to reach full agreement on any course of action. In operating the journal, we soon discovered that framing our collaboration as the work of a collective created challenges. In our experience, to function as a collective necessitates not just shared ideology, purpose, and values, but also a willingness to subsume individual perspectives and elevate the most widely shared ones. This kind of collaboration undercuts the possible significance of contributions from those in the group’s minority. We realized our conceptual frame was undermining the work we could do together and moved to a coalitional approach. A coalition is a much more tactical concept (DeCerteau 36) wherein individual values and ideological commitments may be at odds but are put aside for moments of collaboration around a shared-at-the-time purpose—in our case, the administration of the journal. Adopting a coalitional approach to the day-to-day functioning of the journal was an important aspect of our praxis; how we related to each other as editors was embedded in our goals to foster a transparent and mentor-based relationship with authors.

As with all best laid plans, we hit obstacles along the way. Although we published our first issue in March 2013, it wasn’t until spring 2014 when the Editorial Collective, which quickly was renamed the Editorial Team in correspondence with the Editorial Board and authors, implement-

ed the structure and process that we currently use. The Editorial Team met weekly via Google Hangouts (and continues to do so), and throughout 2013, we had a series of what we called “meta-meetings” about how best to manage the tasks we had and how to handle failures to reach consensus. In November 2013, we posed these questions:

- a. How do we know when a decision has been made? Is it unanimous agreement? What happens when one person doesn't agree?
- b. Can we anticipate the kinds of decisions that we will need to make in a publication cycle and essentially schedule them?
- c. Who gets to decide what needs a pressing answer and what can be tabled? What if the person raising the question disagrees? Are there identifiable characteristics of things needing immediate attention?

We read two articles, “Decide How to Decide” by Ellen Gottesdiener from *Software Development Magazine* and “Negotiation and Collaborative Problem Solving” by L. Steven Smutko from NC State University's Natural Resources Leadership Institute. Smutko's piece was central to reconsidering our goal of reaching consensus. We discovered that while consensus can mean full agreement, it can also incorporate degrees of “endorsement” of a action or decision. In other words, the Editorial Team realized that “a shared viewpoint of the world is not a prerequisite for temporarily joining together to take action on an issue of mutual importance” (Walton, Moore, and Jones 55). Rather, by listening and honoring the sometimes divergent perspectives and contexts of each Editorial Team member, the coalition as a whole reached agreement based on our shared principles and commitments to our scholarly values and open-access ethics.

By the end of February 2014, we decided to focus on this coalitional decision-making process, rather than striving for consensus. We wrote in our minutes that “consensus is the goal; collaboration is the method (?)” and that when we disagree, we would “collaborate to unearth... underlying issues” (“Minutes of Weekly LiCS Meeting”). In the same period, we also worked to clarify our roles and responsibilities. We did this inductively, by first writing lists of the work we were doing in our capacities. While we made all decisions collectively, we had divvied up certain areas of work and assigned titles to them, such as Submission Editor and Managing Editor, in order to make our individual work visible to tenure and promotion committees. We have a Google Doc where we named the responsibilities that fall under particular roles, and we have revisited it subsequently to update it and to discuss workload and production process.

This model of collaborative decision-making carries over in the process we use to evaluate submissions. When a new manuscript is submitted, it is read and discussed by at least two mem-

bers of the Editorial Team, who share their responses to the following questions on a rubric the Editorial Team collaboratively designed over the course of several meetings:

- Is the manuscript relevant to the mission and scope of LiCS?
- Does the manuscript develop a clear research project or argument?
- Does the piece seem particularly (or potentially) innovative, important, or fills a gap in the research?
- Does the manuscript state clearly how the project contributes to a relevant scholarly conversation(s) in composition and literacy studies?
- Does the manuscript engage with recent research in both literacy and composition studies?
- Does the manuscript demonstrate the project is methodologically sound?
- Is the manuscript organized in a way that makes sense and serves the project?
- Should the manuscript be sent out for review and, if so, what suggestions do you have for selecting reviewers?

If the two members of the Editorial Team who first read the manuscript agree, we send it out for external review to two readers selected from our Editorial Associates: they answer similar questions and offer a publication recommendation. When we've received feedback from both readers, all six members of the Editorial Team discuss the manuscript and the reviews, reaching a consensus about whether to continue working toward publishing the manuscript. At any point in this discussion among the Editorial Team, an editor may veto publication, initiating another round of discussion; further, if a team member isn't ready to veto a manuscript, they can voice their reticence to publish using a fingers-based Likert scale. Relying on Smutko's description of the "Five Finger Scale" (23), the Editorial Team uses this rating mechanism because it offers a quick barometer for testing where the team is at while also providing confirmation of one's comfort in publishing a manuscript. If a team member isn't ready to veto but isn't ready to publish, another round of discussion takes place until another vote is called. This collaborative process among the Editorial Team continues until we reach a final decision about the manuscript.

Even though one member of the Editorial Team manages the submissions process and signs off on communications with the author, we collaboratively write feedback to authors. Each Editorial Team member comments on each manuscript in a Google doc shared among the group before our meeting to discuss the manuscript. A member of the team volunteers to compile these responses in an email to the author that is eventually sent out by the individual in the role of Submissions Editor.

The coalitional modes of production at *LiCS* is a conscious attempt to open up the editorial process by valuing the knowledge, expertise, and opinion of each member of the Editorial Team. By working towards consensus via collaborative deliberation, our editorial process tries to democratize the vertical and often black-boxed decision making process used by traditional journals in the humanities and social sciences while acknowledging that a shared worldview isn't required for collaborative editorial decision making.

Vignette Two: Coalition Building via Circulation

It is a truism that anyone with an Internet connection can produce content and that conventional wisdom states “the Internet is forever.” Yet, the very openness of the Internet and our lived online experiences obscure the challenges to online scholarly publishing. At *LiCS*, we want to reach audiences in the fields of composition and literacy studies. The ethics of open-access scholarly publishing mandate that we also preserve that work for future audiences. But, open access also allows us to reach audiences outside of our fields. How a scholarly journal reaches both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences, meets its ethical obligations to preservation, and builds scholarly authority is the subject of this vignette: coalition building via circulation.

LiCS is indexed in restricted (MLA Bibliography, JStor) and open-access (CompPile) scholarly databases specific to our fields, which of course allow scholars to find our authors' work through database searches. Yet, it is also accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. This means that when Annette Vee was interviewed for the *Mother Jones* article “We Can Code It!: Why Computer Literacy Is Key to Winning in the 21st Century,” journalist Tasneem Raja linked to Vee's *LiCS* article “Understanding Computer Programming as a Literacy” within the *Mother Jones* text, bringing her scholarly work to a *Mother Jones* audience. A reader of any web publication expects to be able to link to further web content, and making scholarly knowledge available in this way is the great promise of open-access publishing. It allows our scholarship to travel, building tactical connections among scholars across disparate fields who hold commitments to exploring the complex intersections of composition and literacy.

However, any reader of web content is also familiar with the error message of broken links, “404 not found,” which we have the ethical obligation to ensure never appears when a reader clicks on Vee's or any other article in *LiCS*. Any URL is temporary, so while the Internet may be forever, paths to finding online content are not. As open-access publishers of born-digital content, we have to ensure our links remain stable and able to continue building connections among our readers. To that end, we have recently registered all of our current and past content with CrossRef, so that each article has its own digital object identifier (DOI). DOIs work as forwarding addresses that will always direct users to an article's current location; they function as a stable reference for both private and public indexing services. DOIs are the standard for articles in the social sciences, humanities, and STEM fields. At *LiCS*, we're excited to be adopters of DOIs and

are committed to using them to increase article circulation and connection both inside and outside our disciplines.

The expectation of a *Mother Jones* reader—access—is yet again different from that of a tenure and promotion committee, which demands scholarly authority. While the collaborative editorial process of peer review at *LiCS* determines whether a piece of writing is “scholarly,” many scholars see print as authoritative and are still skeptical about born-digital content. In other words, we cannot expect that every member of a tenure and promotion committee will accept a URL, DOI, or printout of a web page as scholarship. Therefore, from our inception, we have published articles as PDF with a traditional document design modeled on established journals in our field. In this way, the same article that is linked in *Mother Jones* or shared on Twitter (now known as X) can be submitted to a conservative tenure and promotion committee as a print article indistinguishable from those published in more traditional print journals. While PDF is an important design format that establishes our credibility with more traditional readers, it is also crucial for us as an archival format that preserves *LiCS* content for future audiences.

Offering PDF versions of digital content that mimics print publication was also a coalitional action toward prospective writers. Part of our feminist editing ethos is to intentionally query how infrastructure decisions impact different users of the journal through lengthy conversations among the editorial team and through annual reports about our efforts and decision-making to the Editorial Board. Perhaps because the editors were all either pre-tenure or in non-tenure track positions as we developed our publishing infrastructure, we were acutely aware of how the materiality of publications might affect scholars’ job prospects or stability. The additional labor involved in publishing print-like PDF versions of the HTML content was a decision we explicitly discussed as a way to build trust with prospective authors. We imagined what it would take to be in coalition with potential authors who, like some of us, felt hesitant or vulnerable about publishing in a fully digital journal, because of the ways bias against digital scholarship could impact employment.

Our commitment to coalition with authors also drove our focus on establishing a preservation infrastructure for the content we published. For digital publishers, the costs and process of preserving content are reversed. Print publishers are able to serve their future audiences once the book or journal is indexed and placed on the library shelf or captured on microfilm. The costs of print publication are also incurred upfront through the publishing process itself. Now that the publication process has been democratized, the costs are reversed. Instead of the initial cost of printing and distribution, digital publishers are instead allocating resources toward guaranteed access of content for perpetuity. By addressing the question, “How do you make that article available—even findable—to future readers and to published authors?” with a variety of preservation technologies, *LiCS* is consciously contributing to the stable web of knowledge that undergirds the open-access scholarship movement in the academy. By ensuring the preservation of *LiCS* content in perpetuity, we are fulfilling a commitment to the authors who publish with us that their writing will not vanish

and will remain accessible. We believe that these commitments to circulation and access ensure that strategic alliances among scholars and readers across a variety of fields can spark important conversations and initiate justice-informed actions related to reading, writing, and meaning making outside the confines of the journal's pages.

Scholarly born-digital content can be preserved through an institutional repository, and journals sponsored by universities are often preserved in this way. As an independent journal, *LiCS* does not have an institutional home, so we researched our options. At the time, Portico, LOCKS, and CLOCKSS were the online archives available to independent journals, but we chose CLOCKSS for several reasons. One is its method, which audits and repairs digital content at twelve university repositories, thereby offering a level of built-in redundancy that we considered the safest option of the three. Importantly, if a journal ceases publication, CLOCKSS is the only option that automatically makes triggered journal content open-access. CLOCKSS also has stringent requirements to ensure that member journals have established DOIs, inclusion in indexing services, and open-access publication policies. We began indexing our content with CLOCKSS in 2017, ensuring that our content can continue inspiring connections, collaborations and coalitions in perpetuity.

By indexing with various metadata services, assigning DOIs to article content, and employing the CLOCKSS preservation technology, *LiCS* content is circulated and made accessible to all audiences with an internet connection and a desire to read. Utilizing these technologies allows *LiCS* authors to contribute to infrastructures of open knowledge; by harnessing the medial capacities of the web, circulation technologies, like DOIs and CLOCKSS, help the Editorial Team maintain their commitment to an open ethics publication. While access and preservation technologies aren't typically considered central to coalition building, they are significant—if invisible—ways to be in coalition with authors towards the wider democratization of knowledge. Thinking about our preservation commitment as an act of coalition raises interesting questions about the activity of being in coalition. The concept of coalition implies that the parties involved are conscious of—and reciprocating—coalitional action. Can an activity be coalitional if it is illegible to one or more of the parties? Authors and potential authors do not necessarily know to ask digital journals about preservation, or even know that it is something to be concerned about. And yet, the early attention to preservation was motivated by the editorial team's desire to serve authors in the best way available. It was a coalitional action that might be unnoticed by some of the members participating in the coalition. Or, perhaps it is better to characterize it as an imminent coalitional action that will be coalitional if and when authors begin to demand this curatorial responsibility from digital journals.

Vignette Three: Sponsoring Coalition Building via Infrastructures of Exchange

In *Digital Rhetoric*, Douglas Eyman begins his section on "Digital Ecologies" thusly:

I begin by setting up a framework that situates digital circulation within specific ecologies and economies of production: while circulation ecologies represent the places, spaces, movements, and complex interactions of digital texts as they are produced, reproduced, exchanged, or used, the exchanges and uses that take place within those specific ecological circumstances are governed by the economics of circulation (which in turn are subject to the constraints and affordances offered by situated ecologies in which the texts circulate). (84)

Eyman's definitions of circulation, exchange, and ecology are helpful for considering how we designed the infrastructure of *LiCS* with exchange in mind. This is not only the case in terms of technologies like the DOIs described in Vignette Two but also in the ways that the journal structure and individual journal sections invite moments of exchange and possible coalition-building among communities and individuals who may not have the opportunity to engage frequently. In this vignette, we'll describe how existing and planned journal sections create a space for engagement and a place of familiarity for scholars working at the intersection of related, but often differentiated fields. By positioning *LiCS* as a site of exchange that relies on the technologies of circulation described in Vignette Two, Vignette Three highlights the journal itself as a site of engagement and a place where these circulation practices inform an ethics of interdisciplinarity and intersectionality that are enacted toward coalition building around issues in literacy and composition.

While all articles published by *LiCS* straddle the disciplinary boundaries between composition studies and literacy studies, the Symposium section offers a unique opportunity for direct exchange across the pages of the journal. Symposium contributions extend the conversation begun in the inaugural issue concerning a variety of topics, including the ideological nature of literacy; literacy sponsorship; historical legacies of literacy studies in composition; the social turn in literacy studies; and the intersections of rhetoric, literacy, and writing. Symposium contributions since issue 1.1 have expanded the scope of the section, encouraging exchange in areas of concern such as mis/disinformation, health literacy, The Indianapolis Resolution, prison literacy programs, and teaching literacy in the post-Obama era. As a space of productive critique, Symposium contributions offer rich ideas and arguments that, when exchanged, propel the shared conversations of the journal forward and open up new avenues of coalescence and enrichment across disciplines. As the central site of exchange in *LiCS*, the Symposium section is a conduit for circulation and allows ideas to be reproduced, used, extended, refined, and modified to meet the complex and ever-shifting terrain on which composition studies and literacy studies rest.

In addition to the ongoing Symposium, *LiCS* also hosts special issues that provide unique opportunities to extend and transform the ongoing mission of the journal in important ways. To date, *LiCS* has published six special issues. In March 2015, Ben Kuebrich, Jessica Pauszek, and Steve Parks guest edited a special issue titled “The New Activism: Composition, Literacy Studies, and Politics.” Just a few months later in October 2015, Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Kate Vieira, and Morris Young guest edited a special issue on “The Transnational Movement of People and Information.” A special issue on “Literacy, Democracy, and Fake News” was published by the Editorial Team in Fall 2017. Recent special issues include “Composing a Further Life,” guest edited by Lauren Marshall Bowen and Suzanne Keller Rumsey (2018); an issue dedicated to the life and work of Brian V. Street, guest edited by Antonio Byrd, Jordan Hayes, and Nicole Turnipseed (2021); and “Working Toward a Definition of Queer Literacies,” guest edited by Collin Craig, Wilfredo Flores, and Zarah Moeggenberg (2022). These special issues have provided important spaces for exploring focused areas of inquiry in the pages of the journal.

From our perspective, special issues offer multiple points of exchange and a chance for coalition building: first, as editors we’re provided an opportunity to expand our vision of the journal by collaborating with experts and practitioners in our field. Second, for the readership of *LiCS*, the special issues connect scholars in a specialized area with a larger audience for their ideas. Because the majority of *LiCS* articles are in some way politically engaged, the special issues give readers a peek into specific contexts and situational ecologies and encourage action, reflection, and connection building on a given topic. Third, the special issue also democratizes the editorial process, allowing the *LiCS* editors to *exchange roles and authority* in the administration of the journal. This process of exchange between the ongoing and guest editors is a learning process for both groups and is an action in keeping with the feminist commitment of democratizing power that guides our editorial vision. In some ways, any journal that publishes special issues under guest editorship is engaging in coalitional work. On the other hand, this coalitional action might be mediated through greater or lesser editorial transparency, making it more or less likely that early career scholars, for example, would feel empowered to propose to guest edit.

While Vignette Two discussed the technologies of dissemination and circulation that undergird *LiCS*, we hope this third vignette has provided a peek into how the structure of the journal itself is designed to encourage various forms of exchange and possible coalition-building across a diverse range of contexts and topics. Because the free exchange of ideas is a logical outcome of the rights to access encouraged by open-access scholarly publication, we’ve designed structures to promote this exchange into the infrastructure of the journal itself. As the journal transforms and our readership shifts and expands, the forms of exchange facilitated by these sections will likely necessitate new sections and permutations in the journal’s composition. For example, based on our website analytics, readers of *LiCS* in non-English speaking, non-North American contexts have been visiting the site with increasing frequency. We very much welcome these readers and hope they’ll also contribute to the journal and enrich our readership with their own epistemolo-

gies around literacy. Providing a space for reprints or original work that appeared outside of a North American or English language context is something we're trying to grow through scholarly networking, international conferencing, and membership in international literacy-focused organizations, such as the Writing Research Across Borders conference and the International Writing Research Workshop at CCCC. Because of the flexibility of digital journal administration and organization, we need only reach a critical mass of submissions and participation to launch additional sections of the journal that sponsor coalition building around future reading audiences outside of our own North American, English speaking context. The economics of circulation and the ecological transformations in technology, readership, disciplinarity, and editorial make-up will continue to transform the coalitional possibilities encouraged by *LiCS*'s commitments to engagement and will continuously remake the journal in exciting ways.

Vignette Four: Mentorship & Opportunities for Coalitional Labor

As highlighted in Vignette One, decision-making processes and editorial responsibilities are shared across the *LiCS* Editorial Team. Our form of horizontal organization allows each editor to play an important role in the publication process from manuscript submission to article launch. This horizontal organizational structure also provides opportunities for editors to build coalitions on other journal matters, such as decisions regarding preservation technologies, publishing management systems, Editorial Board interactions, and social events to promote the journal. The editors of *LiCS* also believe that a horizontal mentorship program is at the core of the journal's mission and demonstrates a commitment to the democratization of the publication process in an open-access paradigm. In addition to the horizontal mentorship program, the *LiCS* Editorial Team incorporates vertical mentorship to leverage disciplinary and historical knowledge and experience from senior scholars in the field to guard against presentism and provide contextualization of issues in the intersecting fields of literacy studies and composition studies. The *LiCS* commitment to mentorship in horizontal and vertical forms is another form of ethical engagement with colleagues and collaborators both inside and outside the field of Writing Studies; further, it is a core infrastructural component that extends the open-access ethic into the relational aspects of disciplinary membership and scholarly communication in our shared areas of inquiry. Reflecting on what we have and have not accomplished in mentoring raises interesting questions about formal and informal modes of coalition as described below.

Providing mentorship for writers was a central goal of the journal at its founding. Initially, the *LiCS* editors saw a major part of their mission as guiding emerging scholars who lack extensive experience formulating arguments at the intersection of literacy studies and composition studies. The editors saw this goal as an extension of the coalitional action of the journal. In short, we wanted to build an experience for authors that expressed respect and investment in a shared outcome. However, taking a coalitional approach to mentoring is complex. Because of this, our mentoring processes reflect a spectrum of informal and formal activities and surprises.

Creating a formal mentoring infrastructure that is coalitional is challenging. Faced with our authors' job pressures, we worry about inviting a writer to engage in a process of revision with no guarantee of publication over an undefined period of time. We have been engaged in a multi-year process of designing a formal mentorship process with active collaboration from members of the Editorial Board and headed by a newer member of the Editorial Team, Al Harahap, who brings experience in building formal mentoring infrastructure. The types of questions we need to answer to build a responsible mentoring program include:

1. How does an author access mentoring? Is it requested, assigned, suggested? At what stage in the submission process does this happen?
2. What is the timeline for mentoring?
3. What commitments is the journal undertaking in mentoring an author on a publication? What happens if the piece is not "publication ready" after a certain period of time?
4. Who should be mentors? How is their labor accounted for? How are they trained to facilitate a productive mentoring experience?

These thorny questions have delayed our initial ambition to offer a formal mentoring infrastructure. This delay can feel like a failure, but it is also an outgrowth of the carefulness that emerges from our coalitional ethos.

One success we have had in a mentoring ethos is more informal and emerges from our commitment to openness. We strive to be transparent with writers at every step of the process and to treat writers with respect by communicating about—and being accountable for—our timelines for review. Even in cases of manuscripts we do not send out for external review, we write extensive revision notes so that authors will potentially find something useful in their communication with us. In reflection, we think the active practice of collaboration and communication necessary for editing the journal as a coalition might foster the values of transparency and accountability that inform our communication with authors.

We have been more successful with horizontal mentorship within the editorial coalition itself. The Editorial Team has supported members as they apply for jobs and go through tenure and promotion processes. We have been readers of each other's drafts, both scholarship and job materials. Likewise, we have experienced horizontal mentorship within the community of editors of journals in Composition and Rhetoric, particularly with editors of other independent journals. These experiences of horizontal mentoring have been a surprising benefit from our local editorial team coalition and from the unexpected coalition we found with other journal editors. The coalition with other journal editors was initially fostered through conference panels on journal editing; in this way, the infrastructure offered by professional organizations has been central to the creation of

coalitional relationships. Conversations with other editors led to multiple journals offering collaborative workshops intended for conference attendees interested in publication practices and participation in journal editing.

This horizontal mentorship among journal editors has led to collaborations meant to mentor emerging editors and writers. Partnering with Laura Micciche of *Composition Studies*, the *LiCS* Editorial Team proposed a horizontal mentorship workshop for the 2017 CCCC conference in Portland, Oregon, that targeted new and experienced scholars interested in getting published in independent academic journals in the field. Editors from *LiCS*, *Composition Studies*, *Enculturation*, and *Across the Disciplines* facilitated a half-day workshop that demystified the publication process from submission to release. At this workshop, attended by pre- and post-dissertating graduate students, early career faculty, and scholars and instructors in non-tenure positions, we intended to focus on a set of access points to publishing: strategies for submitting a manuscript or a book review to an independent journal, for example. We were reminded quickly, however, not to take for granted what people know about submitting manuscripts to journals—or even about journals themselves. In response to questions from attendees, we found ourselves talking about a range of other issues: not just how to identify “fit” with a journal but also the fact that even journals within the same subfield have specific, sometimes quite narrowly-defined, focuses. Not just how one might begin copy-editing for a journal as a way to get some editorial experience but also what copy-editing really involves, and why it matters. In asking our attendees to think about the work that goes on behind the scenes at independent journals, we also found ourselves offering them richer ways to imagine themselves participating in the life of academic journals as potential writers, reviewers, and editors.

Our participation in this workshop reminded us that our coalitional goal might bring with it a responsibility to provide a venue in which people might publish their work and to understand that many people—established teachers as well as newer graduate students and scholars—need help entering into and navigating this process. Our commitment to open access, in other words, might motivate us to open up more points of access to more potential writers and to make those points of access more transparent. To this end, we partnered with editors from other independent journals to offer a half-day workshop at CCCC in Pittsburgh in 2019 to invite new people to consider editing or even starting new journals. This workshop, “Building and Running an Academic Journal: A Behind-the-Scenes Workshop in Independent Publishing,” was a collaboration between editors at *LiCS*, Laura Micciche of *Composition Studies*, Kristine Blair of *Computers and Composition*, and Michael Pemberton of *Across the Disciplines*.

These kinds of horizontal professional engagement opportunities allow the editors of *LiCS* to enact mentorship in the interest of flattening the academic publication hierarchy, a hierarchy that might lead to black-box decision making processes or concentrated disproportionate amounts of power in the hands of a single editor. For the long term infrastructure health and growth of our

field(s), we see horizontal mentorship as an ethical imperative to sustaining inquiry at the intersection of both composition studies and literacy studies.

While the *LiCS* editors distribute authority and agency across the editorial coalition, they also realize that vertical mentorship from experts in the field is important to their own growth as scholars as well as the growth of authors that appear in the pages of the journal. By frequently relying on the Editorial Board to provide guidance and direction in matters of concern, the journal editors receive instruction from other scholars that safeguards against presentism and locates the journal and its commitments in longer social, cultural, and academic histories. In addition to mentoring the editors, some members of the Editorial Board are providing direct mentorship to emerging scholars in the field. This form of vertical mentorship not only enriches the production of scholarship but allows pre-tenure authors the opportunity to connect with Associate and Full professors over issues outside of the scholarship, including the tenure and promotion process, interfacing with administrators, and the ability to find a productive life-work balance. Though these kinds of issues aren't the concern of *LiCS* directly, our commitment to mentorship and to our colleagues and disciplines more broadly make this kind of engagement an ethical necessity.

Conclusion

In this short piece, we've attempted to show how our editorial infrastructure is anchored in a commitment to open-access, feminist editing praxis, and coalition building among authors, editors and readership. These commitments shape our production, circulation, exchange, and mentorship activities in important ways, allowing the *LiCS* editorial team to organize the complex labor of publishing an independent journal in non-traditional ways. Yet, our work is not without its challenges: the disadvantages of organizing our coalitional activity include a significant investment in time, workload, and editorial labor. Because the *LiCS* editorial team is responsible for every aspect of the publication process, from author submission to manuscript publication, to digital publishing platform design and implementation, to indexing and preservation of journal contents, the workload required from each editorial team member extends beyond decision making into the *doing* of academic journal publishing. Further, our commitment to collaborative deliberation and coalition-based decision making means we also spend a large amount of time working toward decisions in the administration of the journal, the publication of manuscripts, and the determination of the journal's future direction. All of these tasks and processes take time, and time is something in short supply for most.

Challenges aside, the *LiCS* editorial team wouldn't trade our current infrastructures for more traditional organizational models. We believe that the aforementioned engaged, coalitional networks and infrastructures we've created and refined over the last ten years allow us to maintain a high level of transparency both among each other as well as with the authors we hope to publish; further, because of the intensely collaborative nature of our work, we are buoyed by

the ongoing, real-time nature of our process and genuinely excited when we collectively move a manuscript from submission to publication. By augmenting traditional notions of open access via circulation and preservation with social and relational open ethics via production, exchange, and mentorship, we hope that the *LiCS* coalitional editorial model extends the conversation about open access in the realm of academic publication toward opportunities to sponsor coalition-building in the creation and production of scholarship in our respective fields.

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