

## Town Hall 1: Recovering C&W Pasts for the Future

*Kristine Blair, Cynthia Selfe, Gail Hawisher, Mike Palmquist, Janice Walker, Will Hochman, Daniel Anderson, Michael Day, Kathleen Yancey, Traci Gardner, Joe Moxley, Nick Carbone, and Dickie Selfe, with Cheryl Ball.*

In the last few years, we have begun to see some of the field’s founding scholars retire, which has put us in a bit of a reflective mood. Such reflection prompts this Town Hall that—in the spirit of Bruce McComisky’s recent collection on the “Microhistories of Rhetoric and Composition”—aims to recollect brief moments in the history of computers and composition by the people who initiated this field. These moments have been crucial to the formation of the discipline, either by scholarly means, community building, or through lore. We invited the audience to listen to these brief stories during the opening Town Hall in 2016 (at St. John Fisher University) and to participate with their own memories of the field’s important micro-histories. Our goal was to collect these narratives and publish them as a reference for the field, ensuring a remembrance and honoring of our historical roots for future generations of Computer & Writing scholars. We have transcribed and lightly edited the presenters’ presentations for reading in an interview-style below. This Town Hall could not have been made possible with the help of the C&W Organizing Committee, led by Dr. Wendi Sierra, and this Town Hall’s advisory group: Kristin Arola, Scott DeWitt, and Jason Palmeri.

**Cheryl Ball:** Okay, so first up, we have Kris Blair.

**Kristine Blair:** Good morning, everybody. I think I might have stayed a little bit too long at karaoke last night, so forgive me if I get a bit hoarse from having sung “Sweet Caroline” at 11:30 or so last night. But that’s always part of the narrative, right? My first Computers and Writing conference was in 1992 in Indianapolis, and I have been coming back, obviously, for more than twenty years. I think it is that spirit of fun and collegiality that keeps bringing me back and keeps allowing so many of us to bring that next generation back with us. I have to say that my most fun Computers and Writings were El Paso in 1995, Detroit in 2007, Davis in 2009, and that is obviously in part because of the social events!

More seriously, I want to focus on several micro-historical moments in C&W’s history, and I have a bit of script so that I don’t have one of those John Bayer moments where I start crying, because these are really emotional types of stories, I think, and Cheryl alluded to that in her introduction. The ones that I want to address include a sense of the field’s inclusiveness and the role of computers and writing as a feminist field. I’ll give a couple examples of that.

In 1994, when I was a very new assistant professor with Gail Hawisher—it has been so wonderful to see you at this conference, Gail—Patricia Sullivan invited me to participate in an online research group. Its goals were to find a space to discuss online power relationships for academic women representing different career-levels, from graduate students to full professors. I was honored to be among this research group—I was a very, newly minted PhD—and particularly because it led to Gail and Pat’s publication *Women on the Networks: Searching for e-Spaces of Their Own*, and the collection *Feminism in Composition: In Other Words*. As much as this project was meant to be inclusive, that doesn’t mean there weren’t others who didn’t feel they could share all aspects of their life stories, both personal and professional. Sometimes, those were based on particular types of cultural markers that went beyond academics. This was most evident in the response by Joanne Addison and Susan Hilligoss, both of whom came out on the Web and felt compelled to write about that process in the collection that Pamela Takayoshi and I edited, *Feminist Cyberscapes*, in 1999. I mention this because their chapter then went on to win the Ellen Nold Award for Best Article.

I’m also focusing on these moments because, in many ways, I think it represents the spirit of the computers and writing community and that it celebrates diverse perspectives on the field, and also that we should not presume that the sense of community we might feel as long timers (notice I did not say old timers) is felt by those representing diverse academic and cultural identities. I felt this most keenly at the

2013 C&W hosted by Jill Morris, who was willing to bring forth these concerns about gender and identity politics, as were others, in ways that led to new discussions, both online and off, to not presume that our unique experience of the conference and the field represents everyone's experience of it.

I think that that type of articulation is important to foster inclusive spaces going forward, as Gail and Pat did then, as Gail and Cindy [Selfe] and Dickie [Selfe] and Janice [Walker] and Michael [Day] and Cheryl [Ball] and so many other people in this room have done. That goal enables new people such as Traci Gardner and the Graduate Research Network (GRN) and the role of various caucuses to ensure that that commitment to inclusion and social justice is more than just passive rhetoric but is actually an active reality. We welcome those voices to this field and want to help mentor them so that they can sense the state of the profession. Thanks so much.

**Cynthia Selfe:** So I heard my whole career about how computers compare to print text. I've heard things like, "things disappear from computers and they don't disappear when they're in printed form." I've heard it all. "It doesn't count on computers, where it does count in books"—I've heard that. I want to question that a little bit today. We've also, I guess, heard that computers don't have to do with humans. And books, especially printed books, apparently do have humanity.

Okay, so I've heard all these things. I want to sit here today, and I want to look at an artifact and examine those claims. This is my artifact. [Cindy holds up a falling-to-pieces book.] This is the history book: *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994* (Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, & Selfe, 1996). Jason [Palmeri] is smiling because he probably used it. It's tattered, and it usually sits on my shelf with a rubber band around it so I don't lose it. It has bite marks from the dog. The pages look something like this . . . [she thumbs through and pages fall out].

When I look at this history book, 1979–1994, it does remind me that we haven't done a history project in our field since 1994. That's 22 years! When we did this history book, we had to go back, and we had to get people to go into their closets and get stuff out of their closet, the floor of their closet, to get the artifacts. Here we are, yet again, 22 years later, and nobody has done a history of this community. I think that's important. In fact, it was, for me, doing this book that solidified an understanding of our field and who we were as a group, where we were coming from, where we were going. I don't want this group to lose history, even though we generally look very forward—we're always looking forward. I want another history book—or not a book. I don't want a book—a history project, a multimodal history project, and I think we have to start collecting those artifacts right away.

The other thing I would say is this book contains a lot of things, but the most important part of the book is something that nobody ever notices. I'll hold it up for you. I'm not sure you can see it, but in the back cover of this book are all the names of the people that we had worked with for those first years when we were working in the field. We probably didn't get it all right. We probably left some people out. We probably put some people in. But the impulse was the right impulse. The impulse was to look for the people and the technologies, including I might add the technology of the book. The technology is not the field. The technology is not part of the field. It's the people, you out there.

So do it again in the next few years, and do a project like this going forward. Thank you.

**Gail Hawisher:** I just want to add an addendum to what Cindy was saying. When we were doing this book, our print book, she said to me, "Gail, wouldn't it be nice if we had this hard copy—a book with hardback covers on it—and it's going to be blue, and we're going to have gold going across it. It'll be a lasting book." Look at it now.

To start where Cindy left off, all of us have really worked to build this field. I don't want to short what I'm going to talk about now, but the memory of the making of a discipline—that sounds very grand. Collaboratively. And the most important word there is collaboratively, because as Kris noted and Cindy noted, it's all of us looking into the future.

In those early years, when Cindy and I would talk about building a discipline—we were really using those grand words—we were talking about what we were going to do next and so forth. We did note that other disciplines are marked by journals, conferences, research and theoretical underpinnings, book series,

books, and articles. All of them important to the field. They're not always marked by an attention to pedagogy, and this is what I love about our field, computers and writing, which also is in rhetoric and composition and in writing studies.

Somebody asked me yesterday why our field is so collaborative. I think it does have a lot to do with the fact that we share a pedagogy. Our research might be different, and our theories, but our pedagogy, we share. As Cheryl has already mentioned, the C&W conference, which is now thirty-two years old—that was really one of the first entities of the making of this discipline. That was back in 1984.

The rumblings of this new discipline were all occurring as early as the 1970s, with Hugh Burns with his 1970 dissertation *Stimulating Invention in English Composition through Computer-Assisted Instruction* and Ellen Nold's 1975 article *Fear and Trembling: The Humanist Approaches the Computer*. You won't be surprised to know that the first two awards that *Computers and Composition* gave out were the best dissertation award, the Hugh Burns award, and the Ellen Nold best article award, as Kris has mentioned. Kris will be giving out a total of five awards tonight from *Computers and Composition*.

I want to tell you a short memory of mine. It goes back to the beginning of these awards, which was in 1990. I was just on the faculty of Purdue University, which Kathi [Yancey] will remember when I joined the faculty there. I was going to my first rhetoric conference, and I found myself so excited to be doing that. I had founded those C&C awards with great excitement, and Janice Lauer looked at me, and she said "Gail," and she sighed. Then she said, "You know, we really usually give out awards to people who are no longer with us. This is highly unusual." She sighed again. But fortunately, she was a great fan of both Hugh and Ellen, and she said, "Well, maybe it will work out."

We're glad to say it *did* work out. I'm going to stop now. But I'd love to hear from you at some time what directions you think the field should be heading in now to continue building this discipline of ours. Thank you.

**Mike Palmquist:** I will never again be on a program following all these people.

**Cynthia Selfe:** That's true.

**Mike Palmquist:** It's really an honor to be here. I have a visual aid. I'm going to talk about this book. It's an old book. I love books. Most of you who know me know that I love books. They're wonderful things. So, I'm going to talk about this one. [Mike holds up his copy of Bill Wresch's collection, *The Computer in Composition Instruction*.] I'm going to pass it out. If someone could make sure I get it back...Cindy autographed it. She's the only person that is here that's in that book. That book is really cool, and Cindy just signed it. She's the only person at the conference who's in that book, and it gives a sense of the history of all this. It's really wonderful.

**Audience Member:** What is the year?

**Mike Palmquist:** 1984.

I tell my friends that I'm an accidental professor. In 1985, my wife decided to go to graduate school at a place I'd never heard of—Carnegie Mellon University—and I tagged along. That was good—and not just for my marriage. It was because of my wife that I applied to CMU's doctoral program. And it was because of the people I met there that I became part of the computers and writing community.

In my first semester at CMU, Chris Neuwirth's seminar on computers and composition introduced me to people who would become a central part of my academic life. Chris used Bill Wresch's 1984 collection, *The Computer in Composition Instruction: A Writer's Tool*, to explore key ideas in the field. This was a time when word processing software was in its infancy (well before Gail Hawisher had figured it all out); when helping writers generate ideas and review and comment on drafts was still getting started; and when we were just beginning to recognize the pedagogical implications of computer networks.

Thanks to a CMU program that brought leading scholars to campus each year, I was able to spend time with some of the people who had contributed to Wresch's book—in particular, Helen Schwartz. The

same program brought Nancy Kaplan and Trent Batson to CMU. And through them I met other members of the C&W community. Trent Batson and his ENFI Project [Electronic Networks for Interaction] put me in contact with Terry Collins, Geoff Sirc, and Chip Bruce, among others. Through Nancy Kaplan, I met Stuart Moulthrop and Michael Joyce and Jay David Bolter, who were among the early leaders in hypertext.

And there were happy accidents. My advisor asked me to drive Carol Berkenkotter and her colleague, Cindy Selfe, to the Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition. Cindy was yet another contributor to the Wresch collection. I recall a long conversation with Cindy about flaming and student anonymity, and I recall missing a few turns and ending up somewhere near West Virginia before we finally found our way to Happy Valley. At that point, I was sure my career was over.

While I was still a graduate student, I began participating in the discussions taking place on Bitnet. Inevitably, I started arguing with people. I recall some exchanges with Fred Kemp about the value of showing every character as you typed it during chat. Fred was kind to me about my foolishness. Through Fred, I met still more members of the C&W community, among them Hugh Burns (still another contributor to the Wresch book), Joyce Locke Carter, Paul Taylor, Wayne Butler, and John Slatin.

When I arrived at Colorado State University in 1990, I had the opportunity to work with more of the people who were in Wresch's book: Kate Kiefer (who helped establish the fifth C [a special interest group on computers at the Conference on College Composition and Communication] and co-founded *Computers and Composition* with Cindy), Charles Smith, and Dawn and Ray Rodrigues. They mentored me as I worked toward tenure, and they collaborated with me on articles, books, and research projects.

When my son was young and things were going well, he often said, "I'm a lucky guy." I'll say the same thing today. I'm lucky my wife brought me to graduate school. I'm lucky I worked with Chris Neuwirth. I'm lucky to have read Bill Wresch's book and got to know so many of the people in it. C&W is a great community, and I'm lucky to be a part of it.

**Cheryl Ball:** I invited Fred Kemp to come rabble-rouse, but he couldn't make it.

**Janice Walker:** Like Mike, I'm also an accidental professor. The book on our history that Cindy was talking about ended in 1994. My first foray into academia *began* in 1994, when at the age of 43, I finished my bachelor's degree and started graduate school. Even though I'm of the age—or older—than the first generation of C&W scholars, I guess I'm actually a second generation-er.

My first professional conference was my first year in the MA program. In the spring of '95, I went to CCCC. I had already met the computers and writing folks online, in MOOs. It seemed that at CCCC, though, that all of our presentations were in the basement of the conference. The following year, I didn't go to El Paso's C&W, and that's something I have always regretted.

**Cheryl Ball:** Me too.

**Cynthia Selfe:** You missed the mechanical bull!

**Janice Walker:** No, that was 2000. I got that one. Gail and Cindy riding a mechanical bull!

The following year, I went back to CCCC, and I signed up for the research network forum because I had gotten hammered by all this computer stuff. I was teaching in a computer classroom—the *only* computer classroom they had at University of South Florida—and I was using MOOs in the classroom. I decided I was going to do this really cool project in my first-year writing classroom. I took it to the research network forum as a peace act. They're looking at me like, so, what's a MOO? What's a listserv? Why would anyone want to use computers in writing classrooms?

A few months later, I found myself at my first ever computers and writing conference. That was '96. I never looked back. I didn't have to explain any of these things. I had found a home where I could talk about the things that I was interested in. I could talk with people who were my heroes and heroines in the field. All of the people that I had been reading about and talking to online—they knew what I was talking

about, and I could learn from them. Many of us remember people of that time—Nick Carbone, Todd Taylor—a lot of people who are stars in this field were still graduate students at the same time I was, even if they were a little younger than me.

We were often alone on our campuses, with no one that we could actually talk to, other than my major professor who directed my dissertation and sent me to learn about computers and writing my first semester in graduate school. But other than that, who could we really talk to about our projects?

We started thinking that there ought to be something like the Research Network Forum [at CCCC] at the Computers and Writing conference, something that would provide a space for those of us doing work in this field to get the feedback that we needed from knowledgeable peers. Guess what that was? The Graduate Research Network [that Janice founded], starting in 2000 at the Dallas–Fort Worth conference.

This year [2016] was our 17th GRN. We had about eighty people. That is not our record; we've had over one hundred at some conferences. We're still going strong. We've got a whole new generation of C&Wers who have come through; some started as grad students at GRN and they're now full professors.

**Cynthia Selfe:** And you've given away how many thousands of dollars?

**Janice Walker:** The travel grant fund started in 2004, when I had asked for some money to help pay for grants, I had extra. I gave it away. Cindy said, why don't we do something bigger to raise money for the next year, which was in Hawaii<sup>1</sup>. We began the travel grant fund and give away \$8,000–10,000 every year to help graduate students. We're still going strong.

**Will Hochman:** Hi, my name's Will Hochman<sup>2</sup>, and I'm just going to say a few quick things. In fact, you can use my extra time, Cheryl.

I want to say that I came to this community via Megabyte University, loving email. I still love email. I know listservs are a little bit out of date, but that's where I've lived my life.

I put a poem in *Computers and Composition* somewhere in the '90s—it's hard to remember, because I was hanging out [with Quentin?] so much. This is called *Sharkboy@Hombre*, and I'd just like to read it for Mike Palmquist, Nick Carbone, and Jonathan Alexander, three amigos who've helped me start a life in the community. This is my home. I'm home. I'm happy, and you're my family. I love you.

That's a good way to get people to like a poem.

*I probably live best  
On e-mail these days  
I don't live wonderfully  
Otherwise, I just feel  
Victimized by my liver  
(pollution)  
And not doing enough  
(beyond couch and screen)  
Except I do go on  
Appearing neatly at work  
On working dawns  
Each and every week  
Almost swimmingly*

*Like my father,  
I'm not really the hombre*

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<sup>1</sup> Here's the original auction website for the 2004 GRN Travel Grants, which includes some items of note that have become part of the field's lore: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~kimmehea/cw/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Will was a mensch and a mentor for all who knew him. He passed in the summer of 2017.

*With technical hobbies...  
And like my brother,  
I'm not always enough the sea lover...  
Yet like my mother,  
I swim with my heart anyway  
Why not cry my family  
Electric into your own  
Oceanic reply?  
Maybe I'm more than just some  
Sharkboy ranching fishing lines,  
Maybe I'm someone to chum with e-mail  
For those ripe online remarks  
To stake your sick posts into  
With fences like nets to follow*

The last thing I'm going to read—I think we all found our way into the computers and writing world because we love literature and we love writing. Sometimes, we don't recognize that well enough. To me, I'll always be both and everything.

The first presentation I made at Computers and Writing was *I Sing the Poetic Electure* or *I Sing the Electure Poetic*, I still don't remember, but I was ripping off Walt Whitman left and right—still do, as much as I can. I'd like to read his poem *A Noiseless, Patient Spider*:

*A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.*

*And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.*

**Daniel Anderson:** I'm so honored to be among all of these wonderful, wonderful scholars and people.

I'm going to talk about a post-human moment that happened before we decided there was post-humanism. It was 1993, and I'm going to start with an artifact as well, which is a NeXT computer. If any of you are unfamiliar with the early UNIX machine called the NeXT computer, there was one that sat in the basement at the University of Texas. Here's the post-human moment: It had a name. The name was [odd.en.utexas.edu](http://odd.en.utexas.edu). I'll always remember that URL or that domain name.

Two things are significant about it. One, the "en." The English Department had a subdomain at the University of Texas, probably along with "cs," computer science, and those were probably the only two entities at this university that were doing this stuff. That's a really important lesson for us. We are leaders, not followers, when it comes to digital humanism. That is something we always need to pay attention to and make sure that we're aware of that. The second thing is that the computer sat in this really great space—which was a basement, which is kind of an alternative space—and in that space, it welcomed newcomers.

I was a graduate student thinking I was going to do literary criticism. People said, "Come try this other stuff, and see what happens." It's a bottom-up discipline; it's not a top-down discipline. Always has been bottom-up. I encourage all of you to—even today as you go into these sessions—click on the website. Volunteer to review a session. Post something. Publish your proceedings. Whatever you want to do. You are the ones who are going to drive. It's the bottom-up way that this system works.

The other thing about that space was that it was a wonderful pivot space, because it was looking backwards and forwards. In that space, there was a kind of flux moment of a writing system that was wrapping up in some ways as local networks were transitioning to a global network model. That needs to be in our history. There was a crucial pivoting there, and what was happening at that pivot was a transition. Even though we're about people-building, about ideas, we're also about things. Tool-building is a very, very strong strand in our DNA. It's ongoing.

Now, I know in this room there are four or five major, really interesting tool-building projects. If something isn't working for what we need, pedagogically or scholarly, we make it. If we can't make it, we find someone who can help us. We have tool-building history that is so valuable to our field. Everyone's already been named, people I would like to reference.

The last part—and I appreciate following Will—was that the “en” and the “odd” had a literary reference in there as well. We used that NeXT server and started to build on the Web. We figured out we could add a comment form. What a novel thing! The Web is a flat thing. All you do is read. It's passive. Suddenly, you write a script and you can put something back into it and make a transaction happen. That was really valuable. On that server, we also started playing around with MUDs, which were unbelievably strange to me. I had no idea what this was, but someone said, “Oh, it's like creative writing.” I never really followed through with that, but I worked on it for a little while. The idea was that you could try anything that you want. You should try everything so you know what people are talking about.

So we worked on those things, and the impetus was to embrace creative production. I think that's something our field has always valued. At the '93 Computers and Writing conference, I did a little presentation about MUDs. I spoke creatively. Afterward, someone came up to me and said, “You should do more of that,” which was really encouraging. Instead of saying “Why are you off-base? Why aren't you citing x, y, or z?” they said “Go for it. Do more of that.” And that was John Slatin<sup>3</sup>.

**Michael Day:** I'm going to take you back to 1993, as well. Thanks to Dan for setting me up with all of that.

The hinge moment of historical significance to the community has two parts. They're both in 1993, when we really learned to play online in text-based environments, especially when we learned how to use play to inform our work. In short, 1993 was a hinged moment. It was a Kathi-Yancey-We-Have-A-Moment in which we learned to use luddicity to achieve lucidity.

The first part is excerpted from the first ever C&W online conference in 1993, when Bill Condon and others chaired the conference. He invited us to let the group know how we felt in virtual group environments. And feel we did. We often took recourse in metaphors of navigating physical space such as haunted houses or exploring caves while roped together. Witness what some of us said in discovering our online playfulness:

Eric Crump: Feel a little awkward in this system. Expected that if this were a non-virtual parlor, I'd probably knock over a vase or track mud on the rug.

Michael Day: I feel disoriented. I'm not knocking over vases or tracking mud on the carpet of this virtual parlor so much as trying all the wrong doors with keys that wouldn't fit anyway. And sure, I'm following Eric and following Bob Child, and I hope we're all roped together.

Chris Hult: I'm having so much fun in this conference that my colleagues are beginning to worry about my sanity. Wish I could just drop everything and play in your virtual parlor all day.

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<sup>3</sup> John Slatin was a pioneer in Web accessibility. He passed in 2008. See <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/statesman/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=106462227>

Bob Child: Yikes. Follow me at your own risk. I'm the one who overloaded the network Saturday night and got us all dumped out.

Ildana Hamilton: I too am feeling more comfortable than I did, but I want to wander away from the virtual parlor analogy. I sometimes feel like a spelunker whose lamp flickers or goes out, leaving me feeling somewhat in the dark.

Bill Condon: Help! I've fallen into a virtual space, and I can't get out! We co-chairs can't believe how complicated this has turned out to be. A warning to Eric Crump, next year's chair.

Eric Crump: Warning taken. My head's spinning already just thinking about it, but of course, I'll have the advantage of your experience and precedence.

Mike Morgan: Okay Eric and Jeff, let's not keep it to ourselves. Let's share. What the heck is a MediaMOO? Some kind of multimedia cow? A bovine cousin of apple's agent?

Glenn Mayer: Initial reaction? Hmm. I'm a bit worried to see that Eric Crump had some trouble with this system. I've lurked on a few lists, but I've followed Eric's instructions to some interesting places, including MOO land. I thought I was going to talk to him yesterday in the TR lounge, but the virtual Eric turned out to be a duck.

Eric Crump: Hey Glenn, that duck is me! And we could all be in big trouble here because I'm following Bob Child around, and you're following me around, and if Bob makes some really wrong move, we could all go tumbling off some virtual cliff. Don't trip, Bob!

This is also the year that we discovered real-time online academic discussion in IRC and MOO. After the C&W '93 online events that led to the Tuesday Café and the TechRhet Barn, we embraced our lucid and playful sides and profited from that as a discipline in countless articles and books and our teaching and much more. Eric Crump and Becky Rickly published *It's Fun to Have Fun, but You Have to Know How: How Cavorting on the Net Will Save the Academy*. Becky is sort of channeling Eric here and saying that

the most liberating aspect of the net is that it provides a place for us to “explore the intertwining of seriousness and play for the benefit of both. Between the punning, the parodies, the verse, the gossip are interspersed serious business.” Richard Lanham said that “interactivity *compromises* solemnity,” and that's something that folks still admire in print (as well as the we who live on the net) love to consider—and value. Eric's final observations were that the “playful, semi-reverent banter” found on lists like CREWRT-L, on MOOs and IRC, and on newsgroups “just might save academia from its own ponderous weight. Without the net, the academy will sink into oblivion.”

And although MediaMOO, which lived under my desk at school for 15 years, is decommissioned, playing on the net has kept us alive—as has co-mentoring, collaborating, intertwining, and being lucid has defined us as technorhetoricians.

One parting shout-out: <http://computersandwriting.org/memorabilia>. It's there, okay? The history's there. Don't forget it<sup>4</sup>.

**Kathleen Yancey:** Thanks for including me in this illustrious group. I don't plead guilty to the age. Also, you'll see some things here, the '90s, and pivots among them.

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<sup>4</sup> Sadly, it's not there anymore. C&W.org went offline some time in 2017 and has yet to be recovered.



In 1994, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) hosted three conferences on portfolios. One in Baltimore with Peter Elbow focusing on print, one in Scottsdale, Arizona, focusing on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) with Maryann Smith and Bill Condon, and one in Indianapolis focusing on electronic portfolios with keynoters Gail Hawisher and Cindy Selfe. The good news was people actually came, and they had something to talk about; this was 22 years ago, so that was not a small thing.

Cindy and Gail were kind enough to invite me to guest-edit an issue of *Computers and Composition* focusing on electronic portfolios, that word defined by Alan Purves, a prior president of NCTE who, in fact, died the year the issue came out. He said,

A portfolio is a hypertext. It comprises a number of texts or artifact spaces created and arranged by the author. In education, the author is usually the student. The student created a network among the artifacts. The student seeks to have the portfolio represent her, but (or and) viewers can rearrange the artifacts, make different connections, and comment on one or more of the artifacts or the ensemble. They may make a different web.

The table of contents for that issue included—and in this list here you will hear many micro-historical things, some that have already been mentioned today:

- Purves’s lead article, “Electronic Portfolios”;
- Tim Meyers, “From Page to Screen and Back: Portfolios, Data Lists, and the Transition from Screen to Classroom”;
- Becky Howard, “Memorandum to Myself: Maxims for the Online Portfolio”;
- Kathleen Fischer, “Down the Yellow-Chip Road: Hypertext Portfolios in Oz”;
- Jo Campbell, “Electronic Portfolios: A Five-Year History,” which was about an elementary school, and all the portfolios were housed on a CD;
- Cheryl Forbes, “Co-writing, Overwriting, and Overriding in Portfolio Land Online”;
- Beverly Wall and Robert Peltier, “‘Going Public’ with Electronic Portfolios: Audience, Community, and the Terms of Student Ownership”;
- Steve Watson, “World Wide Web Authoring in the Portfolio-Assessed, (Inter)Networked Composition Course”;
- Brian Huot, “Computers and Assessment: Understanding Two Technologies”;
- Pam Takayoshi, “The Shape of Electronic Writing: Evaluating and Assessing Computer-Assisted Writing Processes and Products,” and one of the smart things she said was that the draft was an antiquated idea the minute she started writing, which seems obvious but nobody had actually said it before;
- and then my closing, which was called “Electronic Portfolio’s Shifting Paradigms,” in which I made six observations that I think are still true today. That speaks to the ability of the field to not only look backward, but to look forward.

I would suggest that those six observations speak to the astounding changes that we’ve not only witnessed, but also participated in during the last 20 years:

1. Together portfolios and the electronic are enacting paradigmatic shifts in literacy.
2. Just as new writing processes and texts are being developed, so too are new reading processes, processes that, again, are not yet understood or narrated or articulated.
3. In the electronic portfolio, the role of the expert is being widened and expertise is being shared.
4. In the electronic portfolio, we see a continued focus on authentic assessment.
5. Because of the electronic portfolio, writers and readers are taking on new roles and developing new identities.
6. Working in the electronic medium, we are being shaped in ways no one fully understands.

Thank you.

**Cheryl Ball:** Lisa Gerrard couldn’t make it in person, so she sent a video that I’ll put on Twitter later, if I can get the audio working. Traci’s up next.

**Traci Gardner:** I have this belief that—at least if you’re of a certain age—when you tried to use computers with your class, you had to break a rule or do something sneaky. So, you caused trouble. And I’m going to talk about the Troublemaker Award.

When I was appointed chair of 7Cs, the CCCC Committee on Computers, Composition, and Communication, in 1999, I began work on implementing a suggestion from Marcy Bauman to give Fred Kemp an award to recognize his work. At the time, our field had the *Computers and Composition* Hugh Burns Dissertation Award, and we had the Ellen Nold Best Article Award, but we didn’t have anything that honored the body of work of anybody in our field. I wrote a draft of guidelines for what became the Technology Innovator Award, though that name was not our first choice.

Many committee members were in favor of Technology Pioneer Award, but I had gotten it in my mind—and maybe it’s true—that everybody referred to pioneers and their wives, pioneers and their families, or just pioneer woman or pioneer women. I was not having any of that. They thought I was crazy, but I was like, NO. So, we chose the Technology Exemplar Award.

The CCCC liaison at the time about turned green when she saw that. Her eyes popped out of her head, and she said, “You *cannot* use that name.” The problem was that they were concerned that if we had an exemplar award, it would be confused with the CCCC Exemplar Award, and then of course all of our profession would have just collapsed. Heaven forbid that two things have the same or similar names.

We worked some more, and we finally came up with the current name, the Technology Innovator Award, but I’ve always called it the Troublemaker Award. If you read the description of the award, you will find both references to pioneers and troublemakers in that description.

Once we had the name, I thought, “Okay. We’re good now.” Except for the problem was I was brand new and didn’t know what I was doing. I didn’t realize that there were actually guidelines out there that I was supposed to follow. I had sort of just bounced this idea. I think I turned it in for my report for what we had done that year. We’ve done this, and this, and we’re giving an award. I finally turned something in, and it turned out that that wasn’t complete either. In particular, I hadn’t bothered to include a budget, because I thought, I’m just doing all the work myself. There is no money that’s necessary. I was just going to pay for the plaque out of my own money, and everything was going to be good.

That year, I also instituted giving the host for C&W a plaque, because I had seen that done at CCCC, and I was like, we need to step up our game. The host needs to be recognized with a plaque for what they’ve done. Yeah, that didn’t have a budget either.

Finally, after a while—I was really stubborn—and a lot of revisions and a lot of emails back-and-forth between our committee members and folks at CCCC, I had what was probably the most awkward phone call of my life with the CCCC chair at the time, Victor Villanueva. I was terrified of him. At one point in the phone call, I remember that he was like, “Okay. This is doable,” and I was like, “...but we didn’t really follow the rules. Are you sure this is okay?” He was like, “I can make this decision.”

The award got approved, fortunately, because Victor is a kind man, and I was just terrified for no reason. In May 1999 at Computers and Writing in Rapid City, I surprised Fred Kemp with the inaugural award.

The 7Cs Technology Innovator Award is now in its eighteenth year of honoring colleagues who are innovators with technology in the classroom or, as I always like to call them, troublemakers. I think it’s fitting that the creation of the award is actually a tale of causing a lot of trouble.

**Joe Moxley:** Well, being here at this moment is a reality check. I’ve been in the discipline since 1984, undergraduate school. It’s just...how did that happen? For those of you who just got here, it’s going to be over in a second.

One thing I’d like to say is that this is the best conference because of the community. It’s bottom-up, go for it, try it, be innovative. I mean, that’s just the spirit of this community. But it’s not completely bottom-up, because people like Cindy and Gail and others who’ve followed them, like Kathi, have created a space that is very nurturing and very loving. Janice was a student of mine, I’m proud to say, and we were in a graduate class where she had an idea for a citation system [*The Columbia Guide to Online Style*], so she went to the conference and came back and said, “They’re adopting it!”

This space here...When you go to CCCC, you bump around, and it's like being in an aircraft carrier. You don't know where you are or where you're supposed to be. The point I wanted to make, following up on the idea of being a pioneer...

**Traci Gardner:** You're a man...

**Joe Moxley:** Ha, I *am* a man, but I grew up in Utah, so the idea of being a pioneer is a little bit problematic.

The thing I wanted to comment on is that people talk having outcomes and needing parameters, but I really think that there's a spirit of creativity and openness and challenge that characterizes this field. I go back to when I was out of graduate school and wrote a book about creative writing pedagogy. I went to dinner with Michael Spooner and Cindy. And she's like, "Hey, this computers and composition is going to get big." That might be. And she said, "We need a journal." And I thought, whoa. That may be better than my creative writing pedagogy project. I don't think she knew that it would become this.

Jimmy Wales was in St. Pete. I talked to Jimmy Wales before Wikipedia was Wikipedia. He was saying, "I got a server, and I'm going to pitch this open source project," but it wasn't called open-source. "I wonder if we can have an encyclopedia," he said. I don't think he knew what it was going to be. Ed Fox, who created The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), had a real passion for accelerating knowledge. He felt like grad students spent a lot of time building literature reviews and no one read them. So he created the NTLTD as an alternative to Bell & Howell [one of the various names for what is now ProQuest]. I don't think he really realized what that would become. Simon Pockley had the first viral dissertation [in 1996], and it created global discussions of IRB and ethnographic practices because he had 2 million reads<sup>5</sup>. This was in the way back.

I remember when I first saw the Internet—oh my God!—I was in the College of Business, and there was this thing called the Internet. I unfortunately didn't buy stock, but I saw this idea. I mean, there was this coffee pot in CERN, and you could see if the coffee was hot. What a great invention! I always loved coffee. I knew this thing would be good.

That thing about being open—you will learn from your graduate students. [Timer buzzes.] Oh, am I out of time? That's all.

**Nick Carbone:** I don't have a moment, but I have a theme. You've heard some of this theme already from people's presentations. My theme is graduate students. Graduate students, and the role that graduate students have had in the conference and in the community of ours.

The most obvious one, for a lot of us, is *Kairos*. It was founded by graduate students. The masthead on the first issue was graduate students: Mick Doherty, Elizabeth Pass, Mike Salvo, Greg Siering—who is now a leader in teaching in technology centers—Corey Wick, Jason Teague, and Amy Hanson founded a journal that is still going 20 years hence. It was one of the most important journals in the field because it was the first embrace, in a consistent and loving way—and by loving, I mean the editorial process—where the process isn't to gate keep; it's to open gates. The creation of webtexts. You see web technology is changing with the journal too.

The other thing we saw when Michael Day was talking about the MOOs. That was a graduate student workshop that Eric and Becky led where we talked about IRC. We left that workshop, and we went right into MediaMoo, with two graduate students, Greg Siering and Tari Fanderclai, hosting Tuesday Cafés in the MOO. In three years, it kept us together every Tuesday night with ongoing discussions that often were reflecting what was going on in emails<sup>6</sup>.

Then there was Eric Crump. Eric Crump was a graduate student who left academia full time and came to journalism. He sustains the TechRhet list now. He keeps our community going with the TechRhet list. He founded *RhetNet*, which was a magazine experiment and is now archived at the WAC Clearinghouse.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.duckdigital.net/FOD/FOD0837.html> for Pockley's dissertation, *Flight of Ducks*.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Tuesday Café's, see <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/1.2/coverweb/Cogdill/gotuesday.html>

He and Mick and others in those magazines were experimenting with new forms of article writing and publication that were natively indirect, riffing off email correspondence, setting up discussions that were archived and innovative, and created all this room for experimentation.

Then hosting a conference: Rich Rice was a graduate student when he co-hosted—and I can tell you, he did most of the work, with Linda Hanson. I remember we (from Bedford) flew the programs out in boxes, and I drove them to Rich's house, and he had his colleagues all sitting there. We were stuffing the programs into the bags. He was up all night making it happen. Then Eric Crump hosted in '94—first grad student to host. No, he wasn't. When it was in University of Texas, it was co-hosted by Fred Kemp, John Slatin, and then these two graduate students, Joyce Locke Carter and Wayne Butler. Graduate students. The other nice thing about the conference—when it was in Stanford in 2005, it wasn't hosted by a faculty member; it was hosted by Corrinne Arraez, who is an academic technology specialist.

That idea that you don't have to be at the top of the game to be as important to the community is good. And so at GRN every year, we have this really good stuff come in—really good stuff, so you guys are doing a great job. And as a professional graduate student who is ABD, let me say, keep it up!

**Dickie Selfe:** This is a wonderful community. Everybody loves each other. Blahblahblah. [Laughter.] I get to go last, after all these people? Geeze.

It doesn't happen by itself. That's my main thing. A welcoming community is that way because people work behind the scenes often, and I just want to encourage people to continue doing that. There is a lot of great work that we don't even realize is happening.

This is a picture of DMAC, which is Digital Media and Composition and has been at The Ohio State University for 10 years. [Dickie shows a picture of DMAC participants.] Just finished the other day. CIWIC [Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms], which is its predecessor back at Michigan Tech, went on for many years—30 years, right? Every year, anywhere from fifteen to forty people would come to these places and stay for two weeks. They would not just get their feet wet; they'd get up to their knees in theory and praxis and pedagogy and lots of nurturing.

That's not the end-all. That's just one example of many kinds of experiences that we create as a community for other people so that they don't just hear about us; they come in and they leave fully charged...at least for the next week... to go out and do really good work and creative work. It's a very creative group.

I want to challenge everybody who's coming up—mostly this will be people who are mid-career—to think about their own kinds of events that they can hold so people can come and really get invested in a certain area. I had a couple of things listed...but, at any rate, I did a little bit with K–12 teachers. It could be with gaming. It could be with coding. It could be with any number of things, and a lot of people are already doing that kind of stuff. We need to make it clear and visible that people are doing that work, and we need to do more creative work that way.

Second, I worked for ten years to do the Digital Pedagogy Poster sessions at CCCC, and it wasn't just me. Doug Eyman and I worked for the last many years and were leading the charge for a Computer Connection at the DPP to get CCCC to continue doing it. It's a struggle. You have to keep working with people; there's a new chair every year, and you have to convince them that this is a good thing, and you have to get everything lined up. Then you go through your own review process. So, it's a lot of work with an institution that isn't in and of itself naturally inclined to do work that shows our projects in their best light. I think digital presentation is the way we need to do it.

That has a long history in itself. I don't know when we started lobbying to try to get computers at CCCC, but it was a long time ago, and a lot of people put a lot of energy into it. We had a couple of presidents that had pushed it, and they still couldn't get it done. Finally, it happened, and the last two or three people who came through there were wildly supportive of our work. That's going to continue. We have great people: Stephen McElroy, Moe Folk, and Catherine Bridgeman are going to take this stuff up, and they're going to take it forward.

But that's not the only institution we need to push ourselves into. We need to go to other conferences that you hold dear, and we need to do the background work—work with the institutional people that set up those conferences—and try to make our work doable at those places.

I want you to get out there and do it.

**Cheryl Ball:** We have one minute left, and I apologize that we did not have time for discussion. I know that you will appreciate that we had all of these amazing voices. However, this is the beginning of this conference. We have the entire weekend to continue this discussion.

**Gail Hawisher:** I just wanted to say this one thing. I think with Nick talking about graduate students—that was so very, very important. As he said, you don't have to be at the top of your game to participate. The thing is that graduate students are often the ones that when you come back, they are at the top of the game. This is why we need them all: to work with that middle generation.

**Cynthia Selfe:** My motto is that we do not protect graduate students; we involve them.

**Cheryl Ball:** That's the perfect segue into our final announcement. As you go into your next sessions, I think—if anything—we've learned that the community is feminist and welcoming and encouraging from all levels. Traci Gardner is running our mentoring network this weekend, so if you—no, no, only *you* can hold the pool noodle, Traci! If you need a mentor badge, Traci has them. If you are a first-time attendee, please come let us know. She can give you a little badge and set you up with a mentor who can take you through the conference. Not that we're going to hold your hand, but we're going to introduce you to people. We're going to help you navigate the things that will then become your first open door to the community. Thank you so much for coming.



*From left to right: Dan Anderson, Will Hochman, Joe Moxley, Dickie Selfe, Cindy Selfe, Traci Gardner, Gail Hawisher, Nick Carbone, Kathi Yancey, Michael Day, Kris Blair, Mike Palmquist, Janice Walker, Cheryl Ball. Photo courtesy of Risa Gorelick-Ollom*