

**REPORT
to the
FACULTY EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE COMMITTEE
Professional Development Travel Grant
(Spring–Summer FY 08)**

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Summary: The FEIC grant monies paid for my attendance at the Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) professional development institute at The Ohio State University, May 29–June 10, 2008. This report indicates the outcomes of that experience.

Overview of DMAC Institute

The nationally recognized Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) institute (held at Ohio State University) is a hands-on, professional development workshop focused on multimedia and new media theory and production within English Studies. During the workshop, participants engaged in learning about the effective use of digital media in humanities classrooms. I was a staff member for the institute, which afforded me the opportunity to engage in helping others professionally develop while also adding to my own professional development, as outlined in the components and outcomes below.

Professional Development Components

Attending the institute offered me the following benefits:

- (1) meeting new faculty and graduate students from across the U.S. with whom I shared teaching and research ideas. As editor for the top multimedia journal in English studies—*Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy* (<http://kairos.technorhetoric.net>)—networking with new scholars is crucial to the continued existence of the online, all-volunteer journal. (We always need authors.)
- (2) interacting with participants—especially those very new to digital writing studies, which the institute attracted—to help ground and inform my research on teaching readers new to reading and composing new media texts.
- (3) working one-on-one with top scholars to get feedback on my projects, particularly my nascent work on the field’s first all-digital, multimodal “book,” *The New Work of Composing*. My co-editors on this collection also attended the conference, and we were able to collaborate on some of the particularly tricky aspects of composing a digital book for a new academic digital press, the editor of which also runs the institute. (More below in outcomes).
- (4) working in state-of-the-art digital writing labs, where I learned what the most up-to-date equipment for multimedia writing production is.

Outcomes

Below are the outcomes related to the professional development components listed above.

- (1) Due to my role as *Kairos* editor, I was able to assist several DMAC participants in crafting their DMAC projects for publication in *Kairos*. I was able to publish three of their projects in the journal’s new reader forum section (i.e., “letters to the editors”) in our August 2008 issue. Please

see the Disputatio section at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/13.1/> for these examples. I also talked with several participants about authoring larger works in the future, so I consider my networking for this SoTL-themed journal a success.

- (2) By attending sessions led by both new and experienced scholars (e.g., attending “Video Assignment--Director's Commentaries and Bloopers Reels with Dr. Louie Ulman”), I was able to learn about and integrate several new assignments into my Multimodal Composition class (Eng 239) for this fall (i.e., director’s commentaries, which function as reflective letters/writers memos, as part of student video projects). My updated syllabus, based on learning from top scholars in digital media this summer, can be found at <http://www.ceball.com/classes/239>. I will discuss additional outcomes related to DMAC and the syllabus under #3.

I was also able to lead the reading discussion on “Day Four: Thinking about multimodal composition rhetorically”), which helped me in my research of better understanding how teachers new to digital media approach the teaching and learning of digital media themselves. Regarding my participation in the discussions, I want to note a possible, future research avenue: My initial observations from DMAC discussions indicate that new teacher–composers of digital media have a paradoxical relationship to *learning* versus *teaching* digital media. That is, teachers value learning digital media themselves but underestimate the intellectual labor and time commitment needed to compose such texts in their classrooms or for scholarly purposes. At the same time as they value learning about digital media, they overestimate the importance of creating grading rubrics for their students’ work—students who are also new to digital media composing. This paradox was prevalent in many discussions at DMAC where the participant–teachers exhibited enthusiasm for their own “play” involved in learning new media during the institute while, on the other hand, they were critical about how their imagined/future students’ would approach learning and producing the same media in playful ways. This paradox concerns me because it reflects writing teachers’:

(a) sense of loss of teacherly authority (especially in relation to the grading schema but also in relation to their authority to teach digital media when they are ‘supposed to be’ writing teachers), and

(b) inability to see writing processes as transferrable across media and genre.

This topic needs further research, and I will encourage others to study this teacher-education issue in more depth.

- (3) My original objective/outcome for attending DMAC was to create a better, outcomes-based syllabus with sequenced assignments for my ENG 239: Multimodal Composition course. While I was able to craft better sequenced assignments after attending DMAC, an even more exciting prospect for this class arose out of my attendance. As mentioned in the professional development components above (see #3 in the previous section), one of my goals was to meet with the co-editors for the digital book called *The New Work of Composing*. This digital book will be an outcome of the Thomas R. Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, which is held bi-annually at the University of Louisville, where both my co-editors on this collection work. (They are the conference organizers.) The theme of the conference is also “The New Work of Composing,” and its theme is digital media. While at DMAC, we discussed ways to proceed on this book collection, which is expected to be the first digital media book published *in* digital media in the humanities. (Computers and Composition Digital Press—a new, all-online, open-access, academic press affiliated with Utah State University Press—has expressed interest in publishing this collection already. One of the Founding Editors for CCDP is also DMAC institute leader, Dr. Cynthia Selfe.)

During DMAC, we co-editors decided it would be of value to video- and audio-tape much of the conference itself (October 16–18, 2008) and to ask a videographer in our field to create a digital chapter that would serve as an overview of the onsite conference for the digital book. (There is a move in digital scholarship to represent the immediacy of onsite locations through digital media so that readers of the online versions of such “proceedings” can feel more present and, thus, engaged with the digital scholarship. It is our intention that this video-chapter will serve as a thematic connector for readers who were or were not able to attend the conference itself.) The videographer whom we asked to compose this piece wasn’t able to do it, so I volunteered my Multimodal Composition class. Thus, the major outcome for me from DMAC was in getting my undergraduate Multimodal Composition students to participate in producing (including researching, scripting, filming, editing, and submitting) a piece of peer-reviewed digital scholarship that could potentially be read by scholars from all over the world. I am very excited about this prospect and plan to submit a CTLT grant for research and travel funds for the undergraduates to attend the conference so they can film it.

Budget Usage

I received \$750 from this FEIC travel grant, which I put toward my hotel expenses for the 15-day stay at the Extended Stay America in Columbus, Ohio, and gas expenses (since I used my personal vehicle to travel to/from DMAC). The total cost for the hotel, with taxes, was \$700. Gas costs were approximately \$200 total.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank the Faculty Excellence Initiative Committee for offering the Professional Development Travel Grant. I am honored to have been awarded \$750 from the university—it affirms my appreciation for the university’s strong pedagogical mission, of which I am grateful to be a part (and to recruit others to). My professional development as a teacher corresponds strongly to my development as a researcher, and because the FEIC was willing to support my work, I will do my best to return the favor by supporting the work of our graduates and, especially, our undergraduates. Thank you for this opportunity.