

The New Work of Composing:
Examining Writing and Editorial Processes in Digital Media Scholarship

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Brief Description

During the *Vectors*–NEH institute, I plan to collate six-months’ worth of digital-media data and compose an electronic book “chapter” that examines the processes of composing and editing digital media scholarship in English studies.

1. Project Summary

For this *Vectors*–NEH institute, I plan to complete a full, first draft of the afterword to a digital, multimodal edited collection (of which I am co-editor) under consideration with Computers and Composition Digital Press (ccdigitalpress.org). The afterword of this e-book, *The New Work of Composing*, addresses how (and, to some extent, whether) composing and editing processes change when the intellectual work of the “book” is performed in a media-rich environment. I will examine (a) my own processes of composing the afterword, and (b) the composing (and revision) processes of a number of the book’s authors who are also producing born-digital work.

Editing and composing digital media scholarship requires not only the print-based scholarly and editorial knowledge standard for publishing in any journal or book but also requires knowing how to compose, revise, evaluate, edit, and manipulate digital multimedia elements in the technologies that are needed. Authors and editors have to understand how both linear, written arguments function rhetorically as well as how non-linear, creative elements (such as the use of sound, graphics, animation, etc.) function aesthetically to make meaning in a single text. My role in leading the digital editing of the book project and in writing its afterword are based on my experience as editor of the most longstanding, peer-reviewed journal that publishes new media scholarship (see *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net>, online since 1996). Below I will describe the book project in more detail because its purpose and structure is crucial to understanding what I aim to accomplish in composing the book’s afterword, which is the project I hope to complete as a participant in the *Vectors*–NEH institute.

1a. Scope of the Book

I am in the midst of co-editing English studies’ first digital media scholarly book, which is being considered by the humanities’ first digital-only, academic press: Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP). The edited collection, called *The New Work of Composing*, is based on the eponymous theme of the bi-annual Thomas R. Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, which my co-editors, Debra Journet and Ryan Trauman, hosted October 16–18, 2008, at the University of Louisville. Below, I quote a large portion of the book’s Call for Texts because it articulates the scope of proposal submissions we received for the collection, which I hope will underscore why the afterword that I propose to author during the *Vectors*–NEH institute fits well within your own call for participation in “Broadening the Digital Humanities.”

What is the new work of composing? Multiplicity of modes and media; myriad new sites and genres; morphing definitions of what counts as text and author and audience; seismic shifts in means of production and delivery. In the midst of cultural and linguistic diversity, increasing globalization, and rapidly changing technologies that characterize contemporary life, these are compelling questions for us—as students, teachers, writers, composers, activists, citizens. As we face complex and semiotically rich

challenges in the university and beyond and move toward new modes of composing, new forms of rhetoric, new concepts of texts and textuality, and new ways of making meaning, this edited collection seeks to explore how new communicative technologies and genres are changing what we think of as “composing” including such core concepts as “writing,” “text,” “author,” “literacy,” and “scholarship.” We envision the book will contain lively disciplinary and interdisciplinary discussions about such issues as

- how do new technologies change the ways we understand the work of composing?
- how does the new work of composing function across English Studies?
- what does digital scholarship look like in English Studies?
- how do issues of access, materiality, or economics affect composing within and outside the university?
- what is the relation between new and old media? between textual, visual, and aural modes?
- in what ways are emerging technologies realizing past assertions of possibility?
- what happens to writing in contexts of new media composing?
- how do we define our responsibilities as teachers, scholars, and practitioners?
- where do we now locate disciplinary identity in relation to the new work of composing?

The book will be submitted to the Computers and Composition Digital Press (<http://ccdigitalpress.org/>), which is affiliated with The Ohio State University, Miami University of Ohio, University of Illinois, The Institute for the Future of the Book, and Utah State University Press. We hope this collection will not only add to our growing understanding of the new work of composing, but will also provide innovative examples of digital scholarship and help us consider the new intellectual work of the “book.”

Because the book will be published digitally, we specifically asked for scholarship that both addresses and enacts the “new work of composing.” We encouraged digital scholarship, including video-texts, sound essays, networked books, webtexts, other conceptions of multi-genre and/or multimodal texts through a proposal process that required authors to submit an abstract of their argument and a description or prototype of the designs through which they wanted to manifest their argument. Each chapter has been chosen because of a relationship between the written argument (as outlined in the author’s abstract) and the content’s design (as outlined in the author’s design rationale). They will all take advantage of the affordances of digital media to enact, in varying degrees, what scholarly multimedia can perform. An accessible interface that will join these chapters through coherent navigation is currently being composed by one of the book’s co-editors, Ryan Trauman.

1b. Contents and Publication of the Book

So that the *Vectors* can better understand the kinds of texts, technologies, and forms/contents I will be writing about in the afterword I propose completing at the summer institute, I include the book’s selected contents, which will not be presented linearly as a Table of Contents, but will be a set of dynamic, semantic clusters. The following list includes the range of authors (listed alphabetically) we’ve chosen; they include both those new to the field, i.e., not the “usual suspects”, and, for digital writing studies, some of the “usual suspects” as well as the authors’ proposed technology-use lists. I note the inclusion of contributors who are not typical to find in digital media scholarship because (1) we co-editors wanted to expand the book’s scope to a broader range of humanities scholars, disciplines that these scholars represent, and (2) my role in helping them compose their chapters (since several are new to enacting their scholarship in digital media) will form a foundation for the editorial reflection I write/make in the afterword.

- Cheryl E. Ball [co-editor], “Afterword” (Describes process of editing digital book collection and authors’ composing processes.) [video, audio, written text/transcripts; container technology uncertain: website, Sophie, Flash?]
- Jamie Bono, Curtis Hiyatsu, Jentery Sayers, and Matthew Wilson: “Standards in the Making: Composing with Metadata in Mind” [blog with CommentPress, audio, video, tag clouds]

- Danielle DeVoss: “Mothers and Daughters of Digital Invention: Women, New Media, and Intellectual Property” [webtext with embedded audio, video, transcripts, graphics]
- Devon Fitzgerald, “Where Ya At?: Composing Identity through Hyperlocal Narratives” [Web 2.0/interactive website with ability to add user-content]
- Morgan Gresham and Roxanne Kirkwood: “Not your mother's argument: The second shift and the new work of feminist composing in a digital world ” [text, video interview, audio, website]
- Debra Journet [co-editor], “Introduction” (Describes transition from history of the book to “the new work of composing.”) [Sophie]
- Valerie Kinloch: ““Place/Power, Politics/Place: Gentrification and Youth Narratives of Change” [Website, audio, video, still photos]
- Jason Lovvorn, “What's the Story? Narrative Forms and Rhetorical Affordances in MMOG Play” [screenshots, machinima, audio, video, BBS-related links]
- Joddy Murray: “Symbolizing Space: Non-Discursive Composing of the Invisible” [Flash, video, non-discursive elements, written text]
- Jonathan Myers, Cheryl E. Ball et al.: “Talking Back to Teachers: Twelve Undergraduates Narrate their Watson Conference Experience” [blog, MySpace, video, audio, stills]
- Tony O'keefe: “Mr. Secrets: A multimedia biography” [video, text, Sophie book]
- Ryan Omizo, “Vernacular Video: Towards a Rhetorical Hermeneutic of Digital Production” [Flash, video, 3D animation]
- James Purdy and Joyce Walker: “Digital Scholarship and Knowledge-Making Practices in English Studies” [audio, video, and visualization maps on a website]
- Jason Palmeri, Bre Garrett, and Denise Landrum: “Re-Inventing Invention: A Performance in Three Acts” [Webtext, wiki, Flash, Quicktime]
- Jackie Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander: “Experience, Embodiment, Excess: *Multimedia[ed]* [E]visceration and Installation Rhetoric” [Flash, Quicktime, blog]
- Anmarie Trimble and Jennifer Grotz: “Experimenting with the Future: *Born Magazine*, Multimedia, and the French Avant-Garde” [website with written text, links, and graphics]

My co-editors and I intend to publish *The New Work of Composing* with Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP), as mentioned earlier. CCDP is the humanities' first digital-only, open-access, academic press. Founding Editors Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher have asked us to submit our prospectus, which we plan to do in May 2009, once we have sample chapters. They have also assisted us in solving unique pre-production obstacles that born-digital books face, such as preparing permission forms for video-interviews, providing capacious Fair Use statements, and discussing their editorial processes for peer-reviewing born-digital works. Digital humanities scholars on the CCDP editorial board include Katherine Hayles, Lev Manovich, and Matthew Kirschenbaum, among others.

1c. Scope of the Afterword

During the *Vectors* institute, I plan to complete the afterword for the book collection. The purpose of the afterword is to revisit the idea of a “book-length collection” when such a collection appears primarily in born-digital media. This chapter will assess digital media scholarship with an emphasis on the process of particular authors' writing and designing processes, as well as my editing of their work. The afterword will use appropriate media to convey its argument and enact both the changing nature of (digital media) scholarship *and* of the book. This chapter will present a theoretical arc in which all the chapters in the collection can be situated on the digital, scholarly spectrum from print-like (in the Introduction) to multimedia (in the Afterword). In playing with the notion of an afterword—as in *after word*—I will represent the push of multimedia on the digital scholarly spectrum.

Chapter proposals were accepted in December 2008, with full submissions to this e-book due August 1, 2009. (Several chapters will be arriving by May 15, 2009, for us to submit as sample chapters with the prospectus.) In May through July of 2009—in conjunction with a new faculty grant I received at my home institution—I will be researching how several authors compose their digital, multimedia chapters for this collection. My

research question aims to examine whether new media scholars' writing processes are the same whether they are composing for print or new media. That is, I ask: Do the rhetorical decisions authors make when they are composing change depending on whether they are writing for print or writing for new media. My primary objective is to discover the connections (as well as any disconnections) between these composition processes for authors. I will be sending video and audio-recording equipment to them, asking them to video themselves composing; record reflections both during composing sessions at the computer and away from the computer; and perform screen captures of their on-screen work. I will also be visiting each author (or group of authors, as the case may be) to do follow-up interviews about their chapter and the composing processes they used to complete it. Although my research question is about examining authors' new media composing processes in relation to their print scholarly composing processes, I expect the data to be generative and so my argument will become clearer and more refined as I gather those digital assets prior to the institute this summer.

1d. Audience for the Project

The audience for the afterword, as well as for the entire book project, will be primarily English studies scholars, particularly those interested in digital media. I also expect scholars in humanities (in media, cinema studies, technology studies, communications, art, design, etc.) and social sciences (in library science, sociology, psychology, informatics, etc.), and organizations (such as academic presses, MLA, and NEH) to be interested in *The New Work of Composing*, since we hope the book will set an example as a first, born-digital academic book in the humanities.

2. Timeline

June 10, 2008	Collaborative meeting with CCDP and co-editors to establish prospectus guidelines
November 15, 2008	Chapter proposal deadline
December 15, 2008	Chapter proposals accepted
April 15, 2009	Send select authors digital recording equipment to self-capture composing processes
May 15, 2009	Send prospectus to CCDP with 3 sample chapters, intro, and interface prototype
June 2009	Travel to authors' sites for interviews
July 1–12, 2009	Review authors' digital assets and complete rough cut of their composing processes
July 13–30, 2009	If accepted, attend <i>Vectors</i> –NEH institute & start compiling afterword draft
August 1, 2009	Remaining chapters due (review/incorporate ideas from selected authors' revisions)
August 1–7, 2009	Complete rough draft of afterword at <i>Vectors</i> institute
Fall 2009	Authors complete suggested editorial revisions; continue to work on afterword
January 15, 2010	Revised submissions due
Spring 2010	Edit completed manuscript and finish afterword
May 1, 2010	Full manuscript sent to CCDP for review

3. Why this Afterword and its Affiliated Book Project?

In December 2006, the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), which is the guiding association for departments of English and foreign languages and literatures in higher education, published a 100-page report on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion. Only four pages of this report were dedicated to digital forms of scholarship, and the forms the report discusses can be categorized as traditional, print-based, literary-critical scholarship digitized for an archive (i.e., Project MUSE; see p. 43 of the MLA report, and subsequent footnote; see also Bernard-Donals' *Profession 2008* response essay). Those four pages, labeled "Scholarship in New Media," signal that digital scholarship is gaining legitimacy in the field. And, yet, that legitimacy gap between refereed print articles and refereed electronic articles still exists. For instance, the survey on which the MLA report was based indicated that "print articles count [...] in 97.9% of departments, as compared with 46.8% for articles in electronic form" (p. 45). In addition, the acceptance of digital scholarship in tenure cases is complicated by the reporting of as many as 50% of department heads who indicate that "they have had no experience evaluating scholarly work produced in these new forms by candidates for tenure and promotion" (p. 44). Based on these numbers, the report suggests that tenure committees do not have the familiarity to read or evaluate digital scholarship, not even for linear, print-based

scholarship that has been digitized for archival purposes. Further complicating matters, then, is the growing body of humanities research that incorporates the use of non-linear, non-alphabetic multimedia in its scholarly publications.

Since the mid-1980s, humanities scholarship (creative and research-based) has been shifting to take advantage of digital, multimedia technologies (see Bolter, 2002). Of particular import to this proposal is the uptake of *multiliteracies* in the early 2000s. The New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis, eds., 2000) defined multiliteracies as communicating in multiple modes of meaning making such as through aural/oral, visual, and gestural modes. In a recent webtext (an article designed specifically for interactive, online distribution), Allison Warner (2007) described how this shift has taken place in digital scholarship:

While a majority of texts published in online journals over the past decade actually are print-replicated articles that follow traditional conventions of scholarly arguments (see Ball, 2004; Krause, 2002; [see also Walker, 2006]), a growing trend within online journals is the publication of web-based texts that are increasingly more reliant on hypertextual and hypermedia strategies to tell their stories and make their arguments. (n.p.)

On one end of the spectrum of digital scholarship, Warner outlines print-replicated articles, like those the MLA Report discusses. On the other end of the digital scholarship spectrum is new media scholarship, which can only be published in digital format because it includes interactive, media-rich elements such as video, sound, and navigational graphics. Digital media scholarship uses the hypertextual and hypermedia (i.e., digital, interactive, multimedia) components Warner discussed and, typically, takes its use of multimedia elements a step farther, moving away from meaning making via alphabetic writing in favor of meaning making using graphics, animation, soundtracks, video, and other multimedia elements.

Despite the growing number of authors who use multiple modes and media in their scholarship, this type of digital scholarship is disparaged by the larger humanities community, as evidenced by the MLA Report's nondiscussion of new media scholarship in the section called "Scholarship in New Media." Another example of new media scholarship's dismissal in the field was provided by James English, who remarked in his 2004 MLA keynote address for the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (which was later published in the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*) that

The actual quantity of scholarship of this more innovative sort, as represented in academic journals, is infinitesimal, and it is mostly to be found in the journals of low-rung academic fields whose claims to scholarly legitimacy would in any case be disputed. (The best example is *Kairos*, a rhetoric and composition journal focused on the use of computing in the teaching of writing. Given the lowly status of composition studies within humanistic research, the *Kairos*'s editors preference for "webtexts" over conventional articles is liable to being read as tacit capitulation to the weakness of their field rather than as a sign of its exceptional inventiveness.) (p. 10)

Although the above quote makes me angry every time I read it, it also reminds me that more research is needed on and *in* digital media scholarship for it to become visible and relevant to the humanities.

4. Related Scholarship/Expertise

Please see my attached vita for a complete listing of my research, editorial, and service experience with digital media scholarship—an agenda that extends back over a decade when I completed the first digital, interactive thesis at my Master's school. Perhaps also relevant to this application, I am in the process of composing my university's first all-digital tenure portfolio. (I'm not aware of anyone else, at any university having done this before, but I've only done a few months research on this.) Although most of the links are broken right now, due to some back-end moving around I did a few months ago and just haven't had the chance to fix yet, the portfolio is available, in draft, on my website: <http://www.ceball.com>. Please let me know if you have any questions about accessing anything through that site. Full URLs for everything that resides online (in their peer-reviewed published locations) are available on my vita, which is attached as a PDF.

4a. Research and Authoring Experience

My research area is reading and composing digital media texts in English studies fields (primarily rhetoric and composition, but also digital poetics/electronic literature and technical/professional communication). I have or will be presenting keynotes, featured sessions, or invited workshops on evaluating digital scholarship at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, The Ohio State University, Miami University of Ohio, University of Findlay, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Modern Language Association, among others. I have published peer-reviewed print and born-digital scholarship on the topic of digital media texts including digital media scholarship in top journals in my discipline, including *Computers and Composition*, *C&C Online*, *Fibreculture*, and *Kairos*, and I have a forthcoming co-edited print collection, *RAW: Reading and Writing New Media* (with Hampton Press) and chapters in other academic presses (print and digital) on digital scholarship and born-digital texts. My research about digital scholarship and my practice in authoring digital scholarship makes me well suited to undertake and complete this unique book project and, in particular to this *Vectors*–NEH institute proposal, to author the book’s born-digital afterword that reflects on the current state of publishing digital scholarship in the humanities and authors’ composing processes for the book.

4b. Editorial Experience

I have over 11 years of combined editorial experience on print and digital scholarly journals, 8 of which have been with *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, where I am editor. *Kairos* is the premier online journal in English studies with an acceptance rate of 10%, and over 45,000 international readers per month. *Kairos* has been publishing born-digital scholarship since the journal started in 1996 (see <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net>). As editor, I mentor authors in composing and revising, and lead the staff through stages of review, copyediting, and design editing (i.e., editing the design of texts to be rhetorical, usable, accessible, etc.). I am proficient in hand-coding multiple computer languages and scripts and using multiple web, image, audio, video, animation, and other multimedia editing programs. A short list of languages and technologies I use include XHTML, PHP, CSS, Dreamweaver, Quicktime, Final Cut, Audacity, Sophie, Word, Flash, etc., and can quickly learn others. My editorial experience with *Kairos* makes me well suited to research the composing processes of digital media authors and to author a digital media afterword for *The New Work of Composing*.

4c. Anticipated Resources

Despite my list of technological proficiencies above, I would not say I am an expert at any of these technologies. I am usually the one teaching others to use technology, so I keep just enough ahead and know how to learn on the spot and troubleshoot. This makes for lots of doing things the hard way. I am hoping to take the opportunity at the *Vectors*–NEH institute to be on the student side of the learning for once. While at USC, I imagine primarily learning more about Final Cut Pro as I edit my research data/videos. I own all of the proprietary software I hope to become better accomplished at, but it will be a matter of deciding whether I need to bring my Mac Pro with me to use during the day since my MacBook probably won’t like running Final Cut. I can easily bring the software and my licenses, if needed. I also hope to learn how to create compressed Flash videos. I am thinking about using Sophie (rather than the proprietary Flash) for the whole of the afterword interface, especially for part of it in which I would be trying to highlight and comment on portions of an author’s composing processes through use of the timelines and annobeam features. As an aside, one of my institute goals is to learn from *Vectors*’ designers how to make extensible text to load quickly and be accessible to screen readers when it’s contained in Flash. (This is a big problem with *Kairos* texts and no one on our staff—all English professors/students who are technologically geeky, but still limited in techie resources—can figure it out, and *Vectors* seems to have that process down.)