

Editor's Introduction

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Over a decade has passed since the Boyer Commission issued its 1998 call for post-secondary institutions to “make research-based learning the standard,” declaring “learning is based on discovery guided by mentoring rather than on the transmission of information. Inherent in inquiry-based learning is an element of reciprocity: faculty can learn from students as students are learning from faculty” (15). The hard work and optimism of students and professors who have committed themselves to these precepts is now yielding exciting results in the field of rhetoric and writing studies. Books like Laurie Grobman and Joyce Kinkead’s 2010 *Undergraduate Research in English Studies*; journal articles like Grobman’s 2009 *CCC* essay on how undergraduate researchers disrupt traditional notions of authorship and authority and Amy E. Robillard’s 2006 *College English* essay on the publication of undergraduate research as a challenge to disciplinary citation practices; and the work of Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle on reconceiving the first-year composition course as an “Introduction to Writing Studies” all speak to how faculty are eagerly rethinking traditional academic practices as they learn with and from undergraduate researchers. Indeed, the growing presence of undergraduate research in the field of rhetoric and writing studies has spurred the Conference on College Composition and Communication to appoint a Taskforce on Undergraduate Research.

Even more energizing is the fact that undergraduate researchers in rhetoric and writing studies can submit their work to a growing number of national and international publications, including *The JUMP: The Journal of Undergraduate Media Projects* (University of Texas, Austin) and *Xchanges* (New Mexico Tech). Even journals that have traditionally published only the work of established scholars now devote special issues to undergraduate research. For example, the summer 2011 issue of *Kairos*, guest-edited by Shannon Carter and Bump Halbritter, will feature digital scholarship by undergraduates.

There is certainly no dearth of excellent work by undergraduate researchers to fill the pages and screens of these publications. For volume 8, *YSW* received over fifty submissions, which came from twenty-eight states and a range of academic institutions: community colleges, elite public and private research universities, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), liberal arts colleges, land-grant institutions, and regional universities. Moreover, undergraduate research in rhetoric and writing studies is being undertaken by students who have a wide range of intellectual interests and professional goals. Through the years, *YSW* articles have been authored by students majoring in Clarinet Performance, Political Science, International Affairs, Arts Management, Creative Writing, Linguistics, Industrial Engineering, Biotechnology, American Studies, Spanish, Media Studies, Philosophy, Business, Psychology, and, of course, English and Communication Studies. Vibrant, engaging, and committed to helping shape public conversations about language and literacy, these undergraduate researchers are producing a substantive body of scholarship.

This year’s contributors to *YSW* are certainly continuing the traditions of excellence established by authors in previous years. Volume 8 opens with Jonathan Doucette’s “Composing

Queers.” Doucette’s inquiry proceeds along two lines. He tracks the “compulsory heterosexuality” of composition studies through scholarly conversations as well as through his own experiences at two different institutions of higher learning. He then draws upon his work as a writing center associate and posits how writing centers, as interdisciplinary sites of learning, have a subversive potential. Through his discussion of queer theory as well as his own self-examination, Doucette begins to create a sense of belonging for himself—and, I would argue, for other undergraduate researchers who seek a place in the academy. He reminds faculty and students alike that the research process itself can be both professionally and personally transformative.

Robin Martin’s essay on the rhetoric of teacher comments also seeks to intervene in ongoing practices of teaching/learning in higher education. Using established research models for analyzing the nature and impact of teachers’ comments on student writing, Martin collected students’ drafts and final papers from a first-year composition course. Her analysis of over two hundred comments on the drafts as well as their impact on students’ final papers offers a glimpse into the nuts and bolts of classroom practice, and her conclusions challenge both students and teachers to think more deeply about how textual interactions shape intellectual development.

Essays by Rachael Furman and Margaret Schmidt demonstrate how deploying the analytic tools and methods of rhetorical study can yield new insights into the form and function of texts traditionally considered literary. Furman brings the insights of Roman Jakobson, Keir Elam, and Judith Butler to bear on her analysis of Cristina Garcí a’s *Dreaming in Cuban*, charting how one of the main characters in the novel, Lourdes Puente, “strives to transform her linguistic insignificance into corporeal exhibitions of personal power.” For rhetoricians, Furman’s work reinforces the importance of recognizing the embodied nature of rhetorical performances and the power of non-verbal communication. In her essay on code switching, Margaret Schmidt examines texts by Gloria Anzaldúa, Rodolfo Gonzales, and Rudolfo Anaya. Schmidt argues for a nuanced reading of the moments when authors engage in bilingualism, positing that acts of translation and linguistic assimilation can produce a variety of both social and rhetorical effects.

Demonstrating the range of interests among undergraduate researchers in rhetoric and writing studies, the final three full-length essays in this volume take readers well beyond the college campus and the types of texts typically studied in English classes. With great sensitivity, Carrie H. Patterson analyzes Raghu Rai’s photographs of the victims of the lethal chemical leak at Union Carbide’s plant in Bhopal, India, in 1984. Using Kenneth Burke’s concepts of identification, con-substantiation, and guilt, Patterson illuminates the visual and verbal mechanisms by which Rai’s photographs seek to motivate social action. Janel Walton focuses her attention on presidential rhetoric. In order to understand the construction of *ēthos* in epideictic discourse, she astutely compares Ronald Reagan’s very memorable *Challenger* speech to George W. Bush’s address to the nation after the loss of the space shuttle *Columbia*, focusing specifically on *phronēsis*, *aretē*, and *eunoia* in both speeches. Finally, Travis Maynard turns readers’ attention to the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. Ernest Bormann’s framework for fantasy theme analysis, notions of the Puritan jeremiad, and Paul Messaris’s tools of visual persuasion are brought to bear as Maynard adeptly documents how the Creation Museum’s architecture and exhibits function as arguments that fortify the beliefs of visitors who adhere to the tenets of Young Earth Creationism.

Collaborating with undergraduate researchers, like those who have published full-length essays in this volume of *Young Scholars in Writing*, is a deeply satisfying intellectual experience for me and for all the members of *YSW*’s editorial board. Doug Downs and Patti Hanlon-Baker, edi-

tors of *YSW*'s Spotlight on First-Year Writing, have the added pleasure of working with undergraduate researchers who are just beginning their post-secondary careers. This year's Spotlight on First-Year Writing features two dynamic essays: Michaela Cullington's exploration of how students understand the relationship between their discursive identities when texting and when authoring more formal, school-based writing assignments and Brett Feldman's comparison of the political rhetoric of Barack Obama and John F. Kennedy. Drs. Hanlon-Baker and Downs have more to say about these two essays and about the publication process in their editorial introduction later in this volume.

I am also pleased to call readers' attention to the five Comment and Response essays that conclude volume 8. As with all academic journals, *Young Scholars in Writing*'s primary goal is to generate and sustain scholarly conversation, providing a forum in which researchers can contribute to the collective knowledge of our field. Under the energizing leadership of editor Susan Thomas, this year's C&R contributors—Catherine Carmichael, Chelsea Curtis, Eliza J. Gettel, Victoria Heckenlaible, and Andy Stewart—take up the call to engage with work published in previous volumes of *YSW*. These C&R essays extend ongoing discussions about the rhetorical function of anonymity, about blogging as a nonlinear research tool, about the powers and limits of definitions within the context of political campaigns, and about the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender. Along with Dr. Thomas, I would like to extend an invitation to undergraduate readers to follow the lead of these talented thinkers/writers and to submit C&R essays that engage with the ideas presented in this volume as well as in previous volumes of *YSW*.

YSW would not be an exciting and prestigious venue for undergraduate research in writing studies and rhetoric without the talented peer reviewers who evaluate each submission. The members of the editorial board are deeply grateful to the reviewers for volume 8: Andrea Abernethy, Matthew Allen, Sarah Ashlock, Carolyn Chiu, Amanda Clark, Angina DeLeón, Kaitlyn Dowling, Ryan Edwards, Lynn Ehlers, ZuZu Feder, Barry Foster, Lea Gee-Tong, Jeffrey Gerson, Jessica Guenther, Devney Hamilton, David Hart, Alice Hu, Arielle Humphries, Michelle Knight, Erin Koller, John Lindsay, Jillian Muir, Elaina Newton, Christina Nguyen, Stephanie Nicholson, Bernice Olivas, Allison Owens, Jonathan Pearson, Jasmine Ragland, Keshav Rao, Marc Rubendall, Kimberly Scheible, Renata Shuklaper, Sonja Swenson, Blaine Turner, Eshan Vasudeva, Amber Watson, Alyssa Williams, and Lilith Wu.

Several members of the editorial board as well as other university faculty used the peer reviews to determine which authors would be invited to revise/resubmit their manuscripts for publication in volume 8. Both in writing diplomatic, detailed rejection letters and in mentoring authors through months of revision, these faculty members are models of professional generosity and scholarly acumen. A huge thanks goes to Doug Downs, Abby M. Dubisar, David Elder, Jennifer Frangos, John Gravener, Patti Hanlon-Baker, Jonathan Hunt, Joe Janangelo, Carmen Kynard, Sean O'Rourke, Amy Robillard, Holly Ryan, and Susan Thomas.

In addition to the undergraduate researchers, peer reviewers, and faculty mentors who are the driving force behind *YSW*, several members of the UMKC community deserve recognition for creating a new institutional home for the journal. Karen Vorst, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, is singularly committed to helping students achieve their full potential, and she has creatively deployed institutional and financial resources to provide support for *Young Scholars in Writing* through volumes 8, 9, and 10. English Department co-chairs Jeff Rydberg-Cox and Virginia Blanton and departmental administrator Sherry Neuerburg are extraordinary problem-

solvers, and they are a daily source of sage advice and support. Jennifer Simpson provided Web site assistance to *YSW*, and a special thanks to Neil Tenbrook for being an expert Excel jockey.

The hard work and creative energies of so many diversely circumstanced individuals are fully realized in the pages that lie ahead for you, the reader. Finding its way into your hands, *YSW* hopes to enlighten, inspire, provoke, create a sense of community, clarify differences, and continue the process of discovery with and for undergraduate researchers in rhetoric and writing studies.

Works Cited

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