

YOUNG SCHOLARS IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

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Don't tell our bosses, but we love our jobs. In our classrooms we get to show students aspects of writing they haven't seen before, and watch with wonder as their thinking and performance expands to fill the newly available space. As editors of the "Young Scholars in First-Year Writing" feature, we get to walk with such students as they take their work several steps further—well beyond what many assume first-year college writers are capable of.

So our jobs are getting better as the First-Year Writing feature continues to grow: in the Feature's third year, we received more submissions than ever, and these submissions represent a wide range of colleges and universities: public institutions, private colleges, and international universities. This diversity in submissions is an excellent sign for the future: it tells us that students and faculty are increasingly aware of *YSW*, and we also think it points to something else that's pretty significant: more and more faculty are integrating research projects on writing itself into their first-year writing courses. We have been impressed (an understatement: several of these submissions—and revisions—left us speechless) by the wide range of thoughtful, compelling projects that writers are undertaking in their initial college courses.

That's important to remember: these articles come from *first-year* classes. These submissions signal that instructors are giving student writers the opportunity to tackle ambitious projects in first-year writing courses. For example, from the initial pool of submissions to just this feature, we had the opportunity to read research on the following avenues of inquiry:

- whether grammatical structures should be taught in second-language classes
- how Facebook status updates rhetorically position their readers
- how the rhetoric of presidential inaugural speeches has changed across time
- how non-profits use digital communication to advocate more effectively
- how college students negotiate competing discourse communities

—and that's only a selection. To see such compelling work growing out of college composition courses is truly exciting.

We are therefore grateful, again, to instructors who encouraged (prodded, cajoled) their students to submit such work to *YSW*. We know about the hours of additional meetings, commenting on student drafts, and encouragement by each faculty member of the student writers who submitted their work, and so we'd like to thank each faculty member: Robert Connor, Lee Fortner, Carmen Kynard, Drew Loewe, Matthew Riley, Dalel Serda, Caroline Smith, Elizabeth Wardle, and Chris Warnick.

This year, every submission was read by at least one (and usually two or three) peer reviewers. Our peer reviewers are writers who have formerly published in or peer-reviewed for the First-Year Writing feature, English majors at Montana State University, and students in English 324 in

Spring 2009 at Boise State University. We know how much time, effort, and energy it takes to read a manuscript generously and closely, and we appreciate the work of all of these reviewers.

Based on those reviews and available space, we invited revisions of five manuscripts. Imagine, for a minute, the scenario: you're a writer who's just worked for weeks (if not all semester) on a research-based essay. Perhaps your instructor mentions *YSW* in class; perhaps she encourages you separately to submit your work there. It seems like an interesting thing to do, and so you meet with your instructor and make additional revisions. Then, you receive a letter from a *YSW* Faculty Advising Editor—one which congratulates you for all of your hard work *and* asks you to engage in extensive revision. You're asked to deepen your analysis, reframe your argument, refocus your evidence. None of this is easy for even experienced researchers—yet here you are, in the summertime, no less, revising your piece from the inside out. That three of these writers completed this process is simply an incredible feat. As writing instructors, we always tell ourselves that motivation and time are immense factors in what writing students can produce; as editors of this feature, we are privileged to witness depths and successes of revision only rarely, at best, encountered in the classroom.

We think you'll enjoy the results as much as we do. Shannon Baldo's "Elves and Extremism: The Use of Fantasy in the Radical Environmentalist Movement" is an analysis of textual artifacts of Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front, focusing on the rhetoric of elf-lore in the eco-terrorism movement. In it, Baldo applies Stewart, Smith, and Denton's theory on how social movements transform participants' perceptions of reality to the question of how non-violent activists become persuaded to violence. Sarah-Kate Magee's "College Admissions Essays: A Genre of Masculinity" is a compelling exploration of how admissions essays function as a genre, within a complex, rich rhetorical situation. Her work here weaves together scholarly voices, sample admissions essays, and further and deeper questions—thus modeling the characteristics of engaging intellectual inquiry. The Feature's final essay is Ann Cochran's "Blogging the Recovery from Anorexia: A New Platform for the Voice of ED." As with Baldo's and Magee's pieces, Cochran's findings are truly unexpected and lend uncommon insight on emerging technologies seen by the fields of Writing Studies and tech-rhet as largely, if not entirely, positive—in this case, the use of blogging as a form of interactive therapy journaling. In an analysis of a number of such "recovery blogs," Cochran points to ways that the interactive, multimodal nature of blogging can actually reinforce, rather than resist, the obsessive character of eating disorders, suggesting how such blogging is best embraced with caution.

Together these articles continue to demonstrate the richness of questions, methods, and analysis available for the study of writing, addressable, with care and guidance and perseverance, even by brand-new members of the academy. We are therefore proud of *YSW*'s role, via the First-Year Writing Feature, in demonstrating and advocating for the remarkable synergy created when first-year students research writing: tremendous growth for the students as writers, and serious contributions to the field's knowledge of writing and how it works.