

Editor's Introduction

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Welcome to the 15th volume of *Young Scholars in Writing*. This issue of the journal takes us back in time to a turn-of-the-20th-century free pediatric hospital run by a female physician; into the heart of university writing centers, blue-book exams, writing majors, and strategic planning; into the identity negotiation of former military servicemembers and the coming-out narratives of a lesbian-feminist activist; through an analysis of poor rhetorical choices in advertising; and back to a prior article on J.R.R. Tolkien. In so doing, the work of the researchers published here takes part in some of the focuses of concern most strongly shaping the fields of rhetoric and writing studies presently: the roles of gender, ideology, and identity in discursive rhetorical performance (and vice versa) in the civic, educational, corporate, and government realms.

As editor, I get to work with typically fifty to sixty students each year who submit articles, a staff of around ten undergraduate peer reviewers who take up those submissions first, and *YSW*'s standing editorial board, comprised of more than twenty faculty from around the country who consider peer-reviewed submissions for necessary revisions and work with students through additional turns of development and review. Each time I pause to reflect for an issue introduction, what strikes me most is how eager, and able, the undergraduate researchers who submit work to *YSW*, and our undergraduate peer reviewers, are to emulate the established professional researchers who already contribute to the conversations these students are joining. This is a zone of proximal development at its most evident, and *YSW* is over halfway through its second decade of serving as such for the next generation of researchers in rhetoric and writing studies.

To me, this means inviting our students into the most central, and sacred, role of colleges and universities. Montana, where I teach, is a rural western state whose pioneer roots lie in the merging of prairie wisdom, agricultural research and technology, and resource extraction. I've spent this semester considering higher education through the eyes of the centenary history of Montana State University, *In the People's Interest* (Rydell, Safford, and Mullen, 1993). This account highlights how MSU has often experienced Montana's vexed relationship with "higher education" and, especially, with teachers who research. "School," in the historical Montana mindset, has often been simultaneously an opportunity and a necessary evil, a place for teaching and learning but not so intuitively a place for discovering new knowledge—especially when the new appears impractical and untested. Research can be recognized as tremendously valuable, as when it resists crop diseases and heightens yields, but it can also be (mis)understood as a way for lazy professors get out of real work (teaching) or an elitist attempt to overturn traditional wisdom and values—in effect, a power play aimed at undermining people who live and work on the land.

When I consider this vexed public understanding of "research" and the role of colleges and universities in building the knowledge which gets taught in schools around the world, I am heartened to see more and more undergraduates participating in contributive research. Research is, foremost, learning. And then it is teaching. This triad—researching, learning, teaching—is literally the source of knowledge. When a teacher does research, they're learning what they might teach. And the truism is true: the best way to learn something is to teach it. Research, in both its learning and teaching functions, is thus among the most active styles of learning possible. With undergraduate research, not only do we engage the perspective and voices of students in this grand act of discovery and conversation; we also broaden the range of people in the world who understand that research is learning, and teaching, and thus the point of higher education. We increase the possibility of a time where higher education is more widely recognized as something more than getting information crammed into your head, and where research of all stripes—not just that leading to profits and

jobs—is recognized both as valid and valuable by a greater proportion of our citizenry (including those we elect to lead us).

And what conversation this volume’s researchers bring us! We open the issue with Rachel Hoffman’s study of the ways Katharine Richardson, an M.D. in Kansas City in the early 1900s, used her rhetorical savvy to run a pediatric hospital against the grain of expectations about women’s roles. Three more articles take up women’s voices in several walks of life. Taylor Rugg examines ways in which former military servicemembers negotiate the identity of “hero” and “veteran” while having regained civilian status. Samantha Resnick queries the relationship between gender and active speaking roles in peer tutors’ writing center consultations. And Helene Slinker considers the coming-out narratives of 1970s lesbian-feminist activists and their portrayal of women’s relationships.

Another group of articles looks into the workings of discourse, rhetoric, and literacy instruction in colleges and universities. Daniel Bell revisits Florida’s “Degrees to Jobs Summit” which, along with the Florida University System’s Board of Governors strategic planning process, offered some stark ideological narratives about the purpose of higher education. We follow that query into the fundamental roles of higher-ed with the first of two multi-authored articles in this volume, a large Penn State-Berks class study into the identity problem plaguing degree programs in writing studies. (Your major’s name may vary.) Narrowing the focus into specific scenes of writing instruction, in this case first-year composition, Devin Prasatek studies one university’s experience with integrating writing center tutor-consultants into classrooms. And in our second multi-authored study, a Utah State University class reports on a blended-method archival and interview-based study of the past, present, and future of college-exam blue books.

Finishing the volume are two more pieces. Our Spotlight on First-Year Writing features Mariah Dozé’s analysis of PepsiCo’s questionable rhetorical acumen in its Kendall Jenner Pepsi commercial. And we close with William Rankin’s Comment & Response on Caitlin Eha’s Volume 14 essay on J.R.R. Tolkien’s “original intertext” in his Middle-earth stories.

Production of any journal involves a lot of moving parts and a ton of work. It’s definitely not always clockwork, this universe; sometimes it’s more like hurricane survival. That was true of this volume: A lot of people had to do a lot of flexing and timely triage to see this issue come together. That began with the researchers who submitted their work, many of whom endured long waits hearing back from us, and then were willing and able to pick up their pieces again after long lapses, reopening and improving their work. I hope seeing their articles come to print feels like just reward for all their accommodation of YSW’s production schedule.

One set of trains that did run on time were our initial peer reviews. To the Summer 2017 Magazine Editing and Production class at MSU, I offer my thanks for much hard work and great insight. Mac Curran, Kat Johnson, Autumn LaDuke, Megan McKeary, Allie Nelson, Adjanni Ramos, Caldeonia Rice, Cullan Staack, Tim Stover, and Rolf Tengdin did very well not only by the writers represented in this volume, but by those whose work is not finally included here but received generous readings and serious treatment by all these reviewers. Foremost among my editorial staff at MSU: undergraduate Editorial Assistant, Kinsie Clarkson. The parts of this production process that went smoothly were the ones she was there for, prior to her successful completion of her degree and graduation. Kinsie offered a terrific model for other undergraduate peer reviewers, and did a superb job of managing submissions and communications with students and Faculty Advising Editors, and keeping me on track in my role as the frequently-overcommitted top of the org-chart. Speaking of Faculty Advising Editors, those hearty souls are the next group deserving of praise and thanks. FAEs—who also comprise the journal’s editorial board—are the heart of YSW’s unique work with student submitters. When students submit pieces that merit a second round of review after initial peer review, FAEs take up their pieces with an eye specifically toward development: within our production timeframe, how much can a submission grow? How much does it need to? Where is the intersection of those lines? If a piece needs more work than seems possible to ask of an undergraduate outside a course structure, the writer receives an in-depth explanation of the piece’s strengths and limitations, and encouragement to keep writing. If a piece’s needs seem manageable given the writer’s existing work, the writer receives detailed feedback and

the coaching required to take a piece through two or three more rounds of revision, to arrive at the quality you see arrayed in a volume like this one. For Volume 15, FAEs included Jacob Babb, Paige Banaji, Heather Bastian, Abby Dubisar, David Elder, Laura Ellis-Lai, TJ Geiger, Joanne Giordano, Angela Glotfelter, John Gravener, Jane Greer, Patti Hanlon-Baker, Joseph Janangelo, Clyde Moneyhun, Sean O'Rourke, Steve Price, Holly Ryan, and Annette Vee. My thanks to each of these exceptionally generous colleagues is endless. I am again grateful to the leadership at Montana State University for their vision in committing to be the institutional home for Young Scholars in Writing and ensuring that, among the many moving parts I might lose track of, funding and in-kind sources are a stable non-hassle. YSW can be offered as an open-source online publication with a free-to-readers print run of 500 copies each year because MSU foots a big bill. Funding comes from the Office of the Provost, Bob Mokwa; the Vice President of Research and Economic Development, Renee Reijo Pera; the College of Letters & Science Dean Nic Rae; MSU's Liberal Studies Program; and the Department of English.

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