

GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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*The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight. . . .*

*I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along. . . .*

*The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.*
—Marge Piercy, “To Be of Use”

As a celebration of work, these lines from Marge Piercy’s poem seem an appropriate opening for volume 7 of *Young Scholars in Writing*. *YSW* proudly presents the work of undergraduate students who have jumped in head first, who have submerged themselves in their research projects, and who have undertaken work that is “real” and expands the boundaries of knowledge in rhetoric and writing studies.

One of the great pleasures of working with *YSW* authors is hearing from them how the experience of submitting, revising, and editing their research for publication and then seeing their words in print often transforms a project that might have begun as a classroom assignment into a more deeply satisfying experience of intellectual labor. Kate Stuart, whose essay served as the lead article in the first volume of *YSW* in 2003, describes the experience this way:

As an undergraduate I had numerous opportunities to write in-depth research papers about a myriad of topics from Shakespeare to *Ben-Hur* and I’d pour my heart into these papers and spend countless hours with my secondary resources as I learned to be part of that academic conversation that validates and authorizes so many academic voices. Then my professor would read my paper and give me an “A” and I would file it away in a box or on CD and there those projects languish. Undergraduates have so little opportunity to have their voices heard in the larger conversation. So it is of unending satisfaction that this essay that I wrote is published and when another academic wishes to study the way girls write about themselves my work is out there for them to access.

Whether it is the satisfaction of reaching a wider audience, defining one’s own research agenda, discovering documents in the archives, or participating in the collaborative processes of revision and copyediting, *YSW* authors most commonly describe their hard work as a rich intellectual endeavor that is unavailable through traditional classroom experiences.

Like their students, faculty members in many disciplines have characterized undergraduate research as a particularly real and meaningful form of academic labor. In her call for colleges and universities to preserve funding for undergraduate research programs during difficult economic times, psychology professor Kelly G. Lambert cites Matthew B. Crawford's recent book, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* and its investigation of types of work that provide individuals with a sense of agency. Based on his experiences as both a political philosopher with a doctorate from the University of Chicago and a motorcycle mechanic, Crawford argues that meaningful work requires one to grapple with material realities beyond oneself and is predicated in part on the opportunity to "dwell . . . in any task long enough to develop real competence" (51). For students undertaking summer research projects in Lambert's behavioral-neuroscience laboratory, the material realities can include uncooperative lab animals, expired or unusable chemicals, and equipment failures. Yet Lambert observes, "While I've never had to tell my students to leave the classroom at the end of my lectures, I must frequently tell the summer research students to leave the lab and get some rest. It amazes me how committed they are to the successful execution of their projects when no grade is involved; when the reward is instead pride and a sense of accomplishment."

Like the motorcycle mechanics with whom Crawford is familiar and Lambert's students, the authors published in *YSW* have grappled with complex worlds far beyond themselves: from ancient Greece to the Nukak tribe in Columbia; from the conferences of tutors and students at a university writing center to the senior thesis of a well-known graduate of Wellesley College in 1969; from the musical rhetoric of the antislavery movement in the nineteenth century to the magical rhetoric of extreme environmental activists at the turn of the twenty-first century. And these authors have certainly been dwelling with their projects long enough to develop real competence. All of this volume's authors submitted their work between January and June 2009. Through the summer, they undertook the substantial revisions recommended by the members of *YSW*'s editorial board, and as authors, they were fully engaged in the final phases of editing and the production process in the fall. With no grade involved, they committed themselves to the work itself and the sense of satisfaction that comes from knowing that their projects are now available to wider audiences. Indeed, one of the best arguments for the value of undergraduate research and "work that is real" can be found, I believe, in the essays featured in this volume of *Young Scholars in Writing*.

Bernice Olivas's project on the importance of crafting and revising one's research question, "Cupping the Spark in Our Hands: Developing a Better Understanding of the Research Question in Inquiry-Based Writing," serves as a most appropriate lead article for this volume of *YSW*. Drawing upon her own experiences in writing research papers, a survey of over one hundred student research papers (both published and unpublished), and her work with students in a first-year composition class at Boise State University, Olivas cogently argues that "a great question isn't written in one try," and she urges writing teachers to help students apply techniques of invention, drafting, and revision to their initial research questions.

The rest of the authors whose hard work fills this volume of *YSW* were indeed "cupping the spark" of their research questions "in [their] hands and blowing it into real academic curiosity." Several authors were curious about rhetorical history and the lessons that the past might hold for today's public persuaders. Lynn Ehlers turns to ancient Greece and considers the complexities of realizing rhetorical success. By analyzing the speeches given by citizens of Corinth, Ehlers establishes that being conversant in the five matters that Aristotle stipulates as the requisite knowledge of the deliberative rhetor may not be sufficient to achieve persuasiveness. For Karen Anton, the

American antislavery movement of the nineteenth century afforded her an opportunity to investigate the role that music can play in the rhetorical work of a social movement. Anton's survey of hymnals, songbooks, and musical performances reveals a wealth of materials that have yet to be considered as rhetorical scholars continue to explore rhetorical history and its multimodal complexities. Andrew Erickson focuses his curiosity on the more recent past—the atomic age that was ushered in when the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. By studying the ensuing war of words between scientists and government officials, Erickson is able to unpack the positions available to the wider public for understanding and articulating the role of atomic research and weapons in the second half of the twentieth century.

Several other authors published in this volume have been spurred to invest their energies in studying more recent political events in the U.S. and around the world. Jonathan Pearson's project was inspired by Hillary Rodham Clinton's historic campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Not content to accept widely circulating, often contradictory, public depictions of Clinton, Pearson pursued his own questions about Clinton's rhetorical astuteness by turning to the senior thesis she wrote at Wellesley and early articles she authored as a law student at Yale. California's Proposition 8 and the drive to constitutionally ban marriage equality for gays and lesbians sparked the curiosity of Toby Rowe. Bringing the concept of monitory democracy to bear on the public discourse surrounding Proposition 8, Rowe's trenchant rhetorical analysis illuminates how a measure that began with the support of only 38 percent of likely voters ended up passing, 52 to 48 percent. Lindsay Gordon shares with readers that her moment of inquisitive inspiration occurred at the breakfast table. While she was skimming the *New York Times*, Gordon learned of the Nukak tribe in Columbia and their encounter with modern life when they left their native forests and moved into the city of San José del Guaviare. Gordon works hard to analyze how the Nukak were subsequently represented in the media and how Western nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) project their authority over indigenous peoples, reasserting Western political and cultural hegemony even as the organizations decry discourses of domination.

The final two full-length essays in this volume return readers to the academy and invite us to consider how educational institutions might support the curiosity and real work of students pursuing their own intellectual projects. Monique Shetayh points out how blogs can function as important venues where students can develop their own writerly repertoires in an environment that operates outside the sometimes silencing structures of school. Molly Wilder's linguistic analysis of writing center tutorials disrupts facile characterizations of nondirective and directive conferencing techniques. Wilder's work is yet another example of top-notch undergraduate research that reveals her committed effort to conduct fieldwork and use the techniques of linguistic analysis to satisfy her own curiosity. Her article also underscores the importance of developing spaces within universities where students like those described in her study—Heidi, Wally, and Marsha—can pursue their own intellectual projects with vigor and dedication.

Indeed, committing oneself to the work of a serious project of intellectual inquiry is not an experience that should be limited to advanced students. Coedited by Doug Downs and Heidi Estrem, this year's First-Year Writing Feature showcases the smart, imaginative work of three students who have just begun very promising undergraduate careers. Downs and Estrem have more to say about these essays in their introduction to the FYW Feature and about the importance of making substantive research opportunities available to students at all levels.

While *Young Scholars in Writing* is committed to celebrating the work of undergraduate

researchers in rhetoric and writing studies, readers should also be aware of the important work accomplished by editor Laurie Grobman, who along with the late Candace Spigelman founded the journal in 2003 and has overseen the journal through its first six volumes. Approximately thirty-five undergraduates responded to Drs. Grobman and Spigelman's first call for submissions in 2003. This year, *YSW* received fifty-seven submissions from students at over thirty colleges and universities across the United States. *YSW* is now being indexed in CompPile and the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography. The journal seeks to reach as many readers as possible through both its print copies and the full-text PDFs of all volumes available at the *YSW* Web site. None of this would have been possible without Laurie's wisdom, creativity and, most importantly, her hard work.

YSW's success is also a testament to the hospitable environment that Penn State Berks created to nurture and grow *YSW*. Several members of the Penn State Berks community deserve great thanks for supporting the journal through volume 7: Chancellor Susan P. Speece; Associate Academic Dean Paul Esqueda; Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Division Head Belén Rodríguez-Mourelo; and former Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Division Head Ken Fifer.

YSW is now preparing to move to a new institutional home at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, beginning with volume 8. Thanks go to Karen Vorst, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Jeff Rydberg-Cox and Virginia Blanton, co-chairs of the English Department. Their willingness to support *YSW* reflects their commitment to the work of undergraduate researchers, and I am grateful for all they do to make UMKC such an engaging intellectual community where the boundaries between teachers and learners are always intriguingly blurred.

Former *YSW* contributors, along with students taking advanced courses in rhetoric, professional writing, and publishing at Penn State Berks, Boise State University, and Montana State University have served as peer reviewers for *YSW*: Matthew Allen, Patrick Belanger, Alaina Brandhurst, Alicia Brazeau, Leena Campbell, Amanda Clark, Birch Criswell, Sheryl Dennis, Kaitlyn Dowling, Lauren Farrer, ZuZu Feder, Savannah Ganster, Olivia Garcia, Laura Goodman, Erin Guiney, Mindy Harward, Stacy Hollingsworth, Rebekah Hoy, Kelly Jakes, Zack James, Ruth Johnson, Dillon Kenniston, Kim King, Andreas Kreutzer, Diana Maley, Dan Mancini, Lucy Marrero, Ryan Marvel, Emily Mullins, Andrew Noel, Kathleen Nye, Bernice Olivas, Lauren Petrillo, Britni Phillips, Benjamin Reed, Chris Simchik, Jason Stephens, Kate Stuart, Amber Watson, Chris Weiherer, Matt Werner, Ali Yeager, and Olga Zaytseva. Their insights and careful reading skills have enriched volume 7 beyond measure.

Several individuals generously shared their editorial expertise with *YSW*'s seven editorial interns for volume 7: Emily Akins (Hallmark Cards), Professor Cheryl Ball (Illinois State University), Karla Fennick (Cerner Corp.), Professor Jeanne Gunner (Chapman University), Margot Patterson (independent writer and editor), Steve Paul (*Kansas City Star*), and Professor James Phelan (The Ohio State University). Both the interns and I are grateful for their insights and advice, which immeasurably enriched our conversations about the work that goes into editing a scholarly journal.

Finally, I would like to thank the faculty members of *YSW*'s editorial board who, along with the student-authors they have mentored, are the type of folks whom Piercy celebrates in her poem. To "go into the fields to harvest / and work in a row and pass the bags along" with them has truly been both a pleasure and a privilege.

Works Cited

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