

*Editorial*

**Reflections: Bridging the Gap**

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**W**hile community literacy and service-learning are now established areas within the larger field of Composition and Rhetoric, I have been in the field long enough to remember when these were new areas – a not so long ago period where what counted as “scholarship” and “appropriate sources” was still very much in flux. During this period, our work wasn’t quite so comfortably situated within the mainstream and our very marginality pushed us to invent (and re-invent) the work our scholarship and, perhaps, ourselves as scholars.

Twenty years hence, we have established some answers to the nature of our scholarship, created our own set of “canonical figures,” and even started to anthologize the work of those early days. Yet this issue of Reflections focused on emergent scholars reminds us of some of those initial concerns about what it is “we” do (and even who “we” are). For with “Bridging the Gap” we are provided a snapshot into how scholars just entering the field are conducting research on newly emerging issues stemming from community literacy and service-learning projects. We can see how issues of sexuality, immigration, state violence, and campus racism have come to the forefront. And we can begin to see how, working with community members, they are helping school-based theatre troupes, collective poetic movements, or community publications to address these issues in creative, energizing, and important ways. Working from the richest elements of our emergent traditions, that is, these scholars announce new agendas and new areas of investigation.

And while we have certainly made progressing establishing our work within our local contexts, these scholars also remind us of the still difficult context in which this work is occurring. Indeed, they develop a cautionary tale about the decision to embed such work firmly within a disciplinary field and university framework. Indeed, these essays ask us to address important questions: how institutional constraints, such as institutional review boards, hinder the types of inquiry-based partnerships that are possible; how graduate education fails to prepare students for the work that lies ahead; and how to engage in community-based work often fails to count for tenure. Clearly, there is much work left to do.

Through publishing this issue on-line, we hope to allow our readers to both gain from the scholarship being presented, and also to participate in further developing the conversation. To that end, Section 1 “Emergent Possibilities” presents important scholarly investigations into how we understand our work as simultaneously researchers and community members. Section 2 “Emergent Problems” presents a series of short essays highlighting an element of the difficulty of undertaking such work from the time one enters graduate school to when, for those fortunate few, issues of tenure/promotion arise. Here each essay is attached to an “on-line” conversation link where others can share their own experiences. Section 3 “Emergent Responses” features brief statements from graduate program directors and educators about how the nature of graduate education must change if it is to fully support the possibilities inherent in community-

literacy and service-learning projects. Here again, each response will be linked to an “on-line” conversation so others can respond and develop solutions.

These conversations and this issue would not have been possible without Publicly Aware Graduate Education (PAGE), a program of *imagining america*. I am very grateful to Sylvia Gale, Program Director of Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE), and the PAGE Editorial team; Kevin Bott, Department of Educational Theater, New York University; Viet Le, Department of American Studies & Ethnicity, University of Southern California; Karen Smith, Department of American Studies, University of Iowa; and Laura T. Smith, Department of English, University of Texas-Austin. Collectively, and in the midst of their own graduate work, they created the initial call for papers, read through the voluminous set of submissions, chose a small subset for possible publication in the issue, and worked carefully with each writer to produce a powerful articulation of the intended argument.

I am proud to present the result of their work to the readers of Reflections.

| Steve Parks  
| Editor, Reflections