

## Introduction: Why We Revise

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Our goal for this special issue was to gather some of the most experienced teacher-scholars of community-engaged writing and rhetoric and ask them how they tend and refine their courses in order to keep them meaningful, relevant, and sustainable. In a sense we view this volume as a way to maintain the momentum created by such collections as the 1997 *Writing the Community* edited by Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters, which helped launch the American Association for Higher Education's effort to increase institutional awareness of service-learning through intra- and interdisciplinary scholarship, and the 2000 special issue of *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* edited by Ellen Cushman, which emphasizes matters of institutionalization. Both publications pay special attention to the situated practices of educators in long-term programs and partnerships. We extend that discussion with a collection that foregrounds pivotal pedagogical decisions and generative questions.

The authors contributing to this collection represent a diverse range of institutions, regions, and community relationships. Each brings considerable experience to the conversation as an inventor and re-inventor of service-learning courses. The latter is a significant dimension of this collection, for if you read closely you will observe instructors carefully probing their own motivations, expectations, and tactics.

In "Genre Analysis and the Community Writing Course," Thomas Deans

traces his decision to integrate genre studies more thoroughly into his first-year and advanced service-learning courses. Particularly influential is an ethnographic study by Ann Beaufort, which identifies five kinds of knowledge essential to novice writers in a nonprofit environment: rhetoric, discourse community, process, genre, and subject matter. Deans adapts Beaufort's taxonomy to redefine the structure of his courses and to clarify the kinds of rhetorical work entailed in community projects.

The next pair of articles explores how instructors respond when student perceptions of a community partnership are different from their own. In "Ethics and Expectations: Developing a Workable Balance Between Academic Goals and Ethical Behavior," Catherine Gabor describes her rhetorical re-framing of a course to make students more mindful of their collaborative relationships. In "Between Civility and Conflict: Toward a Community Engaged Procedural Rhetoric," Hannah Ashley examines how institutional and political contexts influence the kinds of student projects we value most. She critiques and revises her pedagogy to attend more closely to her students' initial beliefs, and to incorporate continuous reflection on the "why stories" that permeate their evolving perceptions and actions.

Such stories permeate our community-based pedagogies as well, as Tiffany Rousculp explains in "When the Community Writes: Re-envisioning the SLCC DiverseCity Writing Series." As she narrates the development of this series from a single writing workshop to a broad scale community literacy center with a "matrix" of community writing groups, Rousculp describes how she and her colleagues learned to listen more carefully to the writers involved in each project and to recognize their agency as co-authors of the Series itself.

Expanded notions of authorship are central to the revisions made by two instructors of community media courses. In "Get Me Rewrite! Five Years of a Student Newspaper Diversity Project," journalism professor Sue Ellen Christian observes that, in the arena of high school publishing, increased public readership means increased editorial involvement from school administrators. Over time she modifies the structure of the project as well as her role in the partnership in order to preserve its core mission while addressing such concerns as censorship, economic stability, and student safety. In "Toward a Praxis of New Media: The Allotment Period in

Cherokee History” Ellen Cushman wrestles with material and institutional constraints, ultimately negotiating the creation of a digital forum where her students co-author multimedia texts with members of the Cherokee Nation. Like Christian, Cushman takes into account her partners’ editorial expectations, which in this case entails broadening ownership beyond the initial authorial community, using a creative commons license to honor the Cherokee ethic of share, learn, share.

The most ambitious revision proposed in this volume is reported by David Cooper and Eric Fretz, who, with their colleagues at Michigan State University, have shepherded a program focused on education for democracy through 13 years of change. During what Cooper and Fretz refer to as the early, middle, and late periods of the SLWP, this program evolved from a traditional civic literacy program paired with service learning, to training in the “habits of democracy” represented by Issues Forums and Study Circles, and finally to active civic engagement in the form of lobbying (#). The Wingspread *New Student Politics* document offers new stimulus for change, as the SLWP practitioners consider possibilities for students to “transform mainstream institutions” both from within and from without (#).

To better understand how the authors in this volume and others like them discern when and how to alter their approaches, we draw upon Donald Schön’s research on the problem-solving characteristics of effective professionals. We offer our provisional analysis of what we term the “*stasis* strategies” documented by engaged teacher-scholars in “*Stasis and the Reflective Practitioner: How Experienced Teacher-Scholars Sustain Community Pedagogy*.” We suggest that these reflective practices are the linchpins of good, sustainable pedagogy.

In his essay, Thomas Deans notes, “[I] like to think—and others articles in this issue affirm my hunch—service-learning practitioners are especially inclined to revamp their courses regularly because they open themselves to the press of student writers doing work of real consequence and to the vitality of local civic communities.” May this scholarship-of-teaching enrich your own.



## Works Cited

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters. *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*. Washington, DC: AAHE/NCTE, 1997.
- Beaufort, Anne. *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999.
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