Reviews

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Review: Shirley K. Rose and Irwin Weiser, eds. *Going Public: What Writing Programs Learn from Engagement.* (Utah State Press, 2010)

Emily Donnelli-Sallee, Park University

Composition's public turn has been rendered most often in pedagogical or theoretical terms. To expand this legacy, Shirley K. Rose and Irwin Weiser offer the field an insightful new portrait, one that features the writing program in the public turn. *Going Public: What Writing Programs Learn from Engagement* identifies valuable theoretical and practical implications of the public engagement movement for the design and administration of writing programs.

The thirteen essays assembled by Rose and Weiser model engaged writing programs, discuss the outcomes of such programs on community and academic partners, problemetize issues of reciprocity and representation around public inquiry, and raise questions about how to best represent, generate, and sustain this work. Resounding throughout the collection is a clear refrain: Engagement involves disruption. When writing programs "go public," so do (and should) traditional notions of where a writing program resides; what "services" it provides and to whom; and how the work of its faculty is assessed vis-à-vis time-honored definitions of teaching, scholarship, and service. While readers will be stimulated by the examples of public engagement projects the book offers, they will find perhaps most compelling the idea that engagement with publics—

both inside and outside the academy—fundamentally disrupts business-as-usual for a writing program.

The collection challenges familiar ideas about the sites and outcomes of public engagement. Just as important as interaction with publics outside the walls of the academy is a concomitant "going public" that occurs as writing programs became more visible to the publics of their own universities. As Michael H. Norton and Eli Goldblatt argue, WPAs must collaborate across institutional publics—across academic departments and units, up and down administrative lines—to secure effective blend of both centralized and decentralized support for public engagement initiatives. In fact, in many ways, this *intra-institutional* public activism is equally critical as university-community dialogue to the practical success and long-term sustainability of public engagement efforts. Susan Wolff Murphy models the importance and potential of community engagement initiatives to build and strengthen relationships among academic publics. Wolff Murphy prompts us to consider how participating in programs like learning communities can position FYC as the primary site "apprenticing" the skills of critical thinking and rhetorical flexibility relied upon by public engagement curricula across the disciplines. Like learning communities, writing centers can also generate such networks, and perhaps more organically so. Writing centers may be centralized resources in practice (open to writers from all corners of the university), but, as Linda Bergmann remind us, it is their highly decentralized, often marginal, institutional locations that make them highly amenable to collaboration. As two of many examples of intra-institutional public engagement presented in the collection, Wolff Murphy and Bergmann's narratives clearly demonstrate the potential for writing programs to be situated and perceived (to quote Jeff Grabill's work) as the "infrastructure" for engaged teaching, scholarship, and service across the disciplines.

The publicity that writing programs gain from interaction with other academic publics on institutional engagement initiatives is often free,

an unintended result of faculty being directly exposed to the work of a writing program. In Wolff Murphy's example, this publicity affirmed the role and value of FYC and established connections across the university that could sustain future engagement projects. While publicity can occur naturally as writing programs collaborate with local, academic publics on institutional engagement projects, Linda Shamoon and Eileen Medeiros emphasize that it also must be pursued intentionally. Making the work of writing programs relevant and intelligible is vital and must start at home, especially given the diverse and ever-shifting administrative structures in play at some universities (where the writing center, for instance, may not be under the same administrator as the English Department or WID program) and the power dynamics that result.

Rose and Weiser wisely observe that navigating systems of power across publics is a task well-suited for writing program administrators and faculty because of our rhetorical training. Most WPAs are expert at articulating goals, methods, and measures of assessment for writing in terms that will be acceptable to diverse constituents—we are activists of this sort on a daily basis. However, as Linda Adler-Kassner asserts, we can adopt new rhetorical personae to reframe perceptions of our work and construct more expansive activist roles for ourselves. Such personae can enable us to move beyond defending the value of writing in the curriculum to articulating the fundamental role of writing in enacting and equipping democracy in any public.

Involvement with institutionalized public engagement initiatives can facilitate increased intra-institutional public dialogue; certainly, this dialogue can help solidify the institutional standing of a writing program, but that is not the only, or most significant, outcome of going public. Some of the most important stories in the collection demonstrate the power of engagement to create new public spheres. Jessie L. Moore and Michael Strickland describe a "signature space," the Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design, they created at Elon University to generate, capture, and publicize students' cross-disciplinary

public writing projects. Readers will be equally intrigued by Thia Wolf, Jill Swiencicki and Chris Fosen's Town Hall Meetings, public spaces devised to bring academic research into public dialogue with students, community partners, faculty, and university administrators.

To be sure, new genres are implicated in—and themselves serve as—new public spheres. This observation is at the center of Timothy Henningsen, et al's narrative of the Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program. The CCLCP Project Planner hybridizes the academic essay and professional project management plan genres, but it is defined more by its social function than formal features. The Project Planner embodies and acts upon the "double-vision" required of community engagement— in this case, faculty and students must envision themselves as part of the community organizations, while community partners must adopt the role of university instructors and mentors to students. Other engaged writing programs hybridize not genre, or subject position, but discursive sphere. In response to the unique retention and persistence challenges faced by their Hispanic students, Jonikka Charlton and Colin Charlton fashioned their writing classrooms as intersections for public and private concerns. The resulting classroom genres "de-privatized" learning—for instance, a "comic strip addressing the personal fear and administrative difficulties with approaching a financial aid office" and a "University Chutes & Ladders game, by students for students, designed to determine if you are college material or not" (82).

Yet the collaboration that constructs new sites and genres for writing programs also reveals the limitations of entrenched academic literacy practices. David Jolliffe, for example, recounts a defining moment in Arkansas Delta History Project when area high school students resisted their university collaborators' plan to use a virtual space for the project. The high school students' patterns of participation betrayed their perception that the space, housed on the university's learning management system, was a domain in which they had no agency to speak. Although just one of several insights contained within Jolliffe's

piece, this example reminds readers that even the most pragmatic spaces and genres involved in engaged projects include power asymmetries that must be skillfully navigated.

In framing the collection, Rose and Weiser identify reciprocity as the defining ethos of 21st century public engagement programs. On the level of the writing course, this reciprocity is achieved when students and community partners embrace the openness to reflect, revise, and create new knowledge together. Rose and Weiser's collection demonstrates the transformative change that occurs when this same brand of reciprocity is adopted as the ethos of a writing program and public engagement is pursued as an act of discovery.