

Editors' Introduction

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As our first volume as co-editors of *Reflections* goes to press, we look back at the journal's achievements and forward to shepherding it through an exciting period of growth in the subfield of community-engaged writing. We are at once committed to upholding its history of quality, cutting-edge scholarship—which has contributed significantly to new ways of viewing, practicing, and theorizing community-based writing—and eager to break new ground. Not least, we are keenly aware that we follow a *Reflections* editorial tradition of excellence and innovation in advancing knowledge in community-engaged writing.

In their inaugural issue (Spring 2000), Nora Bacon and Barbara Sherr Roswell noted, “service-learning is more than good pedagogy: it’s an innovation with theoretical significance, one that challenges us to reexamine our thinking about writing, teaching, learning, community, service,

poverty, privilege, responsibility, justice” (1). These founding editors, followed by editors Steve Parks, Cristina Kirklighter, Paula Mathieu, and Diana George, with the contributions of their editorial teams, guest editors, reviewers, and authors, helped establish the intellectual, theoretical, civic, activist, pragmatic, and pedagogical power of community-engaged writing, positioning *Reflections* at the forefront of change in the field.

Nearly two decades later, community-engaged writing continues to impact faculty, students, communities, and scholarship, stimulating broad disciplinary intellectual questions and commitments. We are heartened by the field’s widening spheres of influence, with new journals, new forums for dialogue, and ongoing, innovative research and writing about a wide range of topics from reciprocity and power, to collaboration and voice, to diversity and difference, to new ways of defining “community(ies),” to the circulation of public discourse, and more. And we look forward to participating in that process as *Reflections* co-editors. The emergence of the Coalition of Community Writing (CCW) and its biannual conference—now in planning for its third meeting, in Philadelphia in 2019—reflect not only the growth of this academic subfield but also a deep need for the kind of local, community-based, educative, creative work and commitments to social and economic justice that characterize it, especially at a time when the “public good” is increasingly laid on the altar of the marketplace. We are proud, along with the *Community Literacy Journal*, to be affiliated with the CCW.

Since its inception, community-based writing research on very real, often messy, always thought-provoking pursuits and projects beyond the walls of the university has helped us all, novice and veteran, to do this work better—with greater impact, keener pedagogy, and more intentional reciprocity. Practitioners and researchers have demonstrated the capacity of community-engaged writing to create new publics, in the sense of Michael Warner’s evocation of public discourse as “poetic world making,” invoking and realizing a world through written and spoken word. And it has helped foster a critical consciousness of writing and reading both world and word in and outside of the traditional classroom. It is in this light that community-engaged work not only forges new directions in composition and

rhetoric, writing studies, and literary studies, but also contributes in new ways to fundamental issues and questions in those fields of study. Its theoretical and practical influence exemplifies how “the richest scholarship often evolves from old conversations taken in provocatively new directions” (Holmes 2014, 577). Thus, the advances and experiments in community-engaged writing sow new insights and understandings that widen the scope of writing studies even as they reap broad disciplinary knowledge applicable more generally to writing pedagogy and scholarship.

In 2000, Sherr and Rosewell argued that “service learning” challenged us to rethink what we do pedagogically and to what end with respect to “poverty, privilege, responsibility, justice” (1). Since then, the challenges to any reflective, critical community-based practice have multiplied in the wake of global upheavals, wars, new technologies, heightened surveillance, intensifying environmental crises, inequalities of wealth, racial and economic injustice, the corporatization of education, and the rise of authoritarian, nationalistic parties and governments, including our own. The list could go on, but the point for us, as we’ve said publicly in calls for submissions, is that along with the enduring issues and themes of community-engaged writing, we hope contributors to *Reflections* will take up these new and exacerbated challenges.

In keeping with the journal’s history of contributing to the many facets of community-engaged writing, we proudly introduce the five articles, interview, and book reviews featured in this issue. Taken together, what strikes us as new editors is both their representation of wide-ranging concerns in the field and their relevance for teaching, learning, research, and disciplinary knowledge in general. The volume begins with “What Changes When We ‘Write for Change?’: Considering the Consequences of a High School-University Writing Partnership,” by Heather Lindenman and Justin Lohr. The authors assess the consequences of a community literacy initiative for the high school youth who participate in it. In so doing, they address a significant gap in community-engaged writing projects in rhetoric and composition—the absence of community partner voices—and offer new ways to develop and enact reciprocity. At the same time,

their findings have broader implications for teaching all students to balance school-sanctioned writing with writing for social change.

Addressing a community literacy initiative for refugees, Michael MacDonald's "Governing Sponsorship in a Literacy Support Program for Resettled Refugee Students" takes up the question of sponsorship, examining it through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality. By looking at how discursive systems operate, typically produced by diffuse, contradictory power relations, MacDonald sets out to "identify and critique competing agendas of control" (39) that risk reproducing repressive sponsor ideologies concerning refugee youth from Somalia, Eritrea, Ghana, Sudan, and South Africa. The conclusions he draws about sponsorship in refugee communities, however, apply broadly to any sponsors of literacy learning.

Next, Maria Novotny and John Gagnon theorize the ethics of research, an area in which they encountered a lack of resources as doctoral students working on their dissertation studies. In "Research as Care: A Shared Ownership Approach to Rhetorical Research in Trauma Communities," the authors describe how their ethnographic, trauma-related research raised critical questions about their responsibility to participants in their studies, leading them to propose a methodological toolkit based on indigenous and feminist perspectives centered on the concept of "shared ownership." Citing Linda Tuhiwai Smith, they go on to argue that "...research as care transforms research from a mere recounting of stories and rhetorical analysis into a process that might otherwise be described as an 'activity of hope'" (95). Like the other articles in this issue, their contribution on the ethics of research fills a gap in the literature.

In "Reaching Backyards and Board Rooms: Strategies for Circulation that 'Change the Conversation,'" John J. Silvestro addresses the challenges nonprofits face in generating circulation. Silvestro offers a case analysis of The Women's Fund of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation's (TWF) circulation strategy, titled "#Smarticles," examining three key elements of the strategy: contesting local norms, storing and scheduling the recirculation of others' texts, and valuing qualitative results over quantitative. Arguing that nonprofits

must “focus . . . on the strangers within our local publics” (127) to generate circulation of social change messages, Silvestro also highlights and addresses a gap in circulation studies by focusing on publics over practitioners and/or their texts.

The final article in this issue, by Emad Mirmotahari, illuminates the ways in which more traditional literary instruction can answer the question, asked with increasing frequency, of why the humanities should continue to be a vital part of any college education. In “Literary Methods and Community Engagement: The Case of Katherine Mansfield’s ‘The Garden Party,’” Mirmotahari shows how a close, careful reading of this sharply observed story about class consciousness can lead students to question their assumptions about their experiences of community engagement with the immigrant communities he assigns them to work with in Pittsburgh. The impact on students, according to Mirmotahari, can be seen in “empowering switch[es]” that “include the nascent ability to ‘know with the heart,’...something that can have long-term transformative social and political consequences” (151).

Lauri Bonahan Goodling’s interview with Kristie Fleckenstein, professor and director of rhetoric and composition at Florida State University and author of 2010 book *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*, discusses the ways advancements in digital tools and technologies impact visibility and social action pedagogies. Together, Goodling and Fleckenstein offer suggestions for creating a “lively classroom” that balances writing for change without imposing specific political agendas on students.

In this issue, we are also pleased to include three timely book reviews. In her review of *Class in the Composition Classroom: Pedagogy and the Working Class*, edited by Genesee M. Carter and William H. Thelin, Laurie Cella notes the importance of this volume at a time when “access to equitable education is under fire” (184). Both of the other reviews are of books that push against traditional approaches to language instruction. Mack Curry IV reviews *Other People’s English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African-American Literacy* by Vershawn Ashanti Young, Rusty Barrett, Y’Shanda Young-Rivera, and Kim Brian Lovejoy. Curry characterizes the book as “a new development in an old

debate on how to embrace unfamiliar languages...that will challenge teachers to reconsider their perceptions of students who write and speak in their home languages in the classroom” (194). Finally, Megan Faver Hartline and Amber Montvalvo review two new books by Steven Alvarez that reflect his “commitment to understanding the complex challenges faced by emerging bilingual (or multilingual) students and their families” (197): *Brokering Tareas: Mexican Immigrant Families Translanguaging Homework Literacies* and *Community Literacies en Confianza: Learning from Bilingual After-School Programs*.

We express our deep appreciation to Cristina Kirklighter, outgoing editor of *Reflections*, for her continued assistance with the editorial transition. Cristina, with Diana George and Paula Mathieu, spearheaded the change in the journal’s subtitle to “public rhetoric, civic writing and service learning” to reflect and prompt the journal’s original and evolving mission. Since then, Cristina, as the editor, has overseen some of the most groundbreaking work in the journal’s history. Jessica Pauszek, associate editor, also deserves our gratitude. Jess’s knowledge of the details of how *Reflections* operates has been invaluable, and we are thrilled that Jess is staying on as associate editor for another issue. We thank Steve Parks for trusting us to be co-editors of the journal and appreciate his help in the transition. His tireless efforts to deepen and widen the work of community writing here in the United States and abroad, and to enable community writers to develop and publish their writing, inspires us as editors to be responsive to geographical, sociocultural, and political sparks of genius everywhere.

We also extend our thanks to outgoing book review editor Tobi Jacobi, whose contributions to the journal in these past six years have been extraordinary, and welcome incoming book reviews editor Romeo Garcia. We express thanks as well to Katelyn Lusher and Susannah Clark, copyeditors; assistant editors Megan Opperman and Trenton Judson; graphic designer Elizabeth Parks, and outgoing website and social media coordinator Wilma Harvey. We thank returning and new board members. Finally, we offer thanks to Penn State University, Berks and to New City Community Press for financial support.

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