

## Standing for Time: Publishing in *WPA*

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*The physical text [of WPA] will stand for time, changing in its meaning as readers change, but remaining “these words” by “this author.” In so doing, the journal function stands against time, slowing writers down, requiring them to rethink and revise texts before they are published . . .*

—Doug Hesse, “The Function of *WPA* at the Present Time”(6)

In his first editor’s introduction for *WPA*, Doug Hesse reflected on the place of this journal in an era when email listservs, digital indexes, and new archival technologies were beginning to make their mark on the profession of writing program administration. In particular, Hesse suggested that it might be “foolish to assume the editorship of a journal in 1994,” when he and WPAs around the country could turn to one another for immediate counsel in electronic forums like the *WPA-L* listserv (6). In these forums, he noted, “Advice begets advice, messages counter messages, and some sense of the state of the art, or at least of the opinion, forms in a day or two”(6). Against this scene of accelerating digital communication, Hesse celebrated the publication process that made *WPA* “stodgy and slow, inevitably behind” the times, but ultimately significant: he noted that “we write differently knowing that our work will be judged, and we read differently knowing a piece has met the approval of at least some of our colleagues” (6). Nearly a quarter-century later, *WPA* remains stodgy and slow relative to our listserv and social media conversations—and we are grateful for it.

In this editor’s introduction, we present a brief review of the historic publishing practices of the journal, trace the calls for articles over the past forty years, and provide a few insights into how publishing in *WPA* has changed over time. We conclude with some advice for present-day authors

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on preparing your work for *WPA* and its readership of committed scholars and administrators.

### HISTORICAL DIRECTIONS

While looking back at the journal's earliest years, *WPA*'s inaugural editor Kenneth A. Bruffee noted that "Every issue of *WPA* to date has contained at least one piece intended to explain how to do something, how to accomplish effectively some particular task that is part of almost every *WPA*'s responsibilities" (6). While Bruffee highlighted this more practical function of the journal, the editors that followed him expanded his vision to recognize the enlarged domain of program administrators, the wide array of stakeholders we work with, and our increasing responsibilities to our institutions, departments, programs, faculty, students, and publics. For example, the journal's third editor Christine Hult noted in her guide to authors that "*WPA* is especially interested in articles on topics such as establishing and maintaining a cohesive writing program, training composition staff, testing and evaluating students and programs, working with department chairs and deans, collaborating with high school or community college teachers, and so on" (2). Hesse expanded on this list of priorities when he assumed editorship of the journal in 1994, stating that

possible topics include the education and support of writing teachers; the intellectual and administrative work of WPAs; the situation of writing programs, within both academic institutions and broader contexts; the programmatic implications of current theories, technologies, and research; relationships between WPAs and other administrators, between writing and other academic programs, and among high school, two-year, and four-year college writing programs; placement; assessment; and the professional status of WPAs. ("Author's Guide," 3)

This description remained unchanged for the next twelve years; however, co-editors Dennis Lynch and Marguerite Helmers introduced their first issue in fall 1998 with a call to explore the increasingly political nature of writing program administration. In particular, they saw the journal as a vehicle for research into the "very real political, curricular, and economic issues facing writing programs" (6), issues such as

integrating writing into the general education program; tracing relationships of course materials to intellectual property laws; and learning the invisible power structures of the university, including how money moves, how programs publicize themselves, how pro-

gram directors work with affirmative action policies, how programs strengthen their connections to writing centers, ESL and modern language programs, and community education and action groups. (6–7)

Alice Horning assumed the editorship in 2009 and revised Hesse’s original list of journal topics to reflect the growing variety of programs within our administrative purview. Horning’s journal issues summoned works exploring various types of program and curriculum development, assessment, “extra-institutional relationships with writing’s publics,” technology, history, theory, and “issues of professional advancement” (3).

For most of its history, *WPA*’s “Author’s Guide” called for shorter works than you will find in the present issue. It wasn’t until 2010 that the suggested word count for full-length articles increased from 2,000–5,000 words to 4,000–7,000 words. As figure 1 demonstrates, the overall number of pages per volume and the density of citations per article have tended upward through the journal’s history.

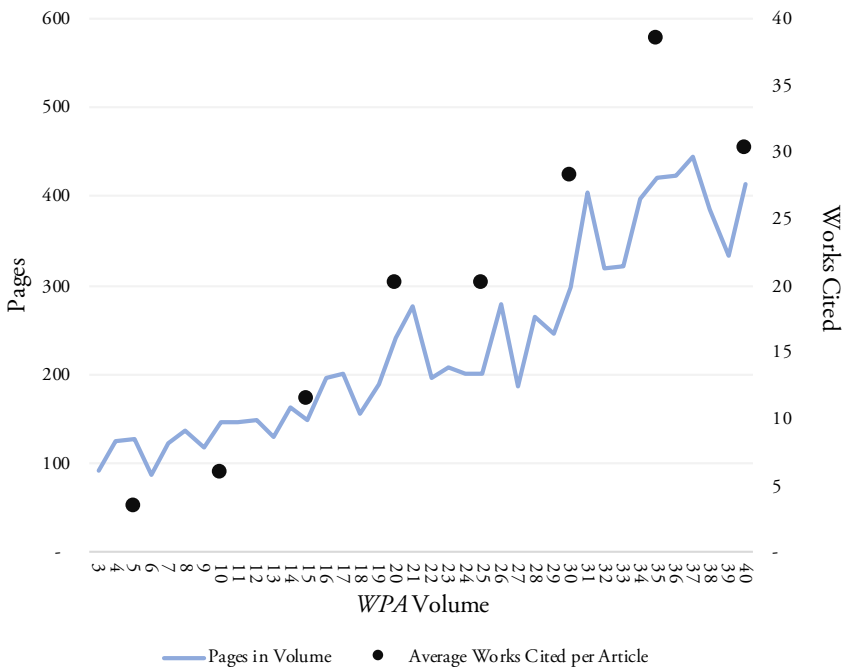


Figure 1. Graph depicting the number of pages in each volume of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* (left scale) and the average number of works cited per article in select volumes (right scale).

As Hesse described in 1994, “The compact is that journal pieces are finished and full, that they invoke their own contexts and locate themselves within the scholarly landscape with the transit of citation” (“Function” 6). As suggested by the journal’s steady increase in the number of citations per article, authors submitting to *WPA* today have a larger and more complex scholarly landscape to navigate, and they have many more citational waypoints available to fix their position within it. Our conversations on listservs, at the annual CWPA conference, and on the pages of this journal include works that employ empirical studies, put program data into conversation with national data, document the emotional aspects of our work with faculty and students, suggest approaches for engaging diverse stakeholders, and interrogate, theorize, politicize, and problematize our discipline, our practices, and our programs. The scope of our work now includes not just first-year writing programs, but writing majors and minors, writing certificates, community writing programs, MAs, and more PhD programs than Bruffee and his authors could likely have imagined. Along the historical path of our field, *WPA* has always made room to accommodate the widening scope and diversity of our scholarly interests.

#### PUBLISHING IN *WPA* TODAY

Our current “Guide for Authors” was carried over with light modifications from the previous editorial team of Barbara L’Eplattenier, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Lisa Mastrangelo. It calls for “a wide range of research in various formats, research that not only helps both titled and untitled administrators of writing programs do their jobs, but also helps our discipline advance academically, institutionally, and nationally.” During our first year as editors, we received new submissions on a range of topics including assessment, emotional labor, placement, technology, professional development, transfer, writing centers, multimodality, and mentorship. The topics represented in this journal and the range of expertise required for program administrators have expanded, matured, and multiplied over the last four decades. While the journal continues Bruffee’s tradition of including works that demonstrate “how to accomplish effectively some particular task,” our research methods have become more complex, and the questions we ask have moved beyond “how to” to embrace the “why to” of our more diverse practices and programs.

We have no data on the number of submissions Bruffee, Hult, or Hesse received during their tenure as editors, but we can safely assume that their acceptance rate was higher than ours. We received 85 submissions during our first year editing the journal; we will publish ten full-length articles this

year. In the next section we briefly outline the editorial and review process, and we offer some advice for developing your article to better address the expectations and needs of the journal's present-day readers. In doing so, we hope to live up to our commitment to make the editorial process as transparent as possible.

### *The Editorial Process*

We believe *WPA* authors deserve timely feedback on their work. We recognize that our authors are frequently under their own institutional and professional time constraints and we strive to communicate our decisions about manuscripts to our authors within six weeks, whether that decision is a rejection, an editorial "revise and resubmit," an external review, or an acceptance.

To guide peer reviewers as they evaluate manuscripts, we ask them to note their level of agreement with the following statements about the work:

1. The manuscript is positioned within an identifiable context: it is well-situated in the scholarly literature; it addresses a current issue, challenge, or opportunity in the field of writing program administration; or it speaks to an established theoretical or research tradition.
2. The manuscript goes beyond mere local reporting ("here's what I did" or "here's the way we do things around here.") If local reports are given, their connection to theory, history, research, or practice are made evident.
3. The manuscript contributes to knowledge in the field, takes up a controversial position in a new or intriguing way, suggests novel practices, or would provide a useful service to *WPA* readers.

We also suggest that reviewers prepare comments for each manuscript author using the following questions as a guide:

1. Is this piece appropriate (or not) for *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and the *WPA* readership? In what way does this manuscript add to the existing knowledge base? (For example, does it present new or little-known material or does it revisit existing material in an original manner?) If it doesn't, how might it? Is the work contextualized within existing work? If not, are there resources you might suggest to the authors?

2. How can this piece be revised? What might the authors do as they prepare the piece for publication?

### *Advice for Prospective Authors*

The best advice we can offer prospective authors is that they read the journal carefully, make a close study of articles that mirror their particular research approach so that they can catch the rhythm of those works, identify the kinds of information they present and how they present it, and mirror some of their organizational strategies. The journal's archive up to the most recent two years is available to the public at the CWPA website, and CWPA members can access all issues there. Prospective authors should also visit the journal's website, particularly the "Info for Authors" page which provides directions for article length, citation styles, document formatting, and so on.

Regarding the organization and composition of your manuscript, one of the most popular resources we provide at our editors' workshops is a hand-out developed by associate editor, Jim Nugent. A few of the more salient points from that document are summarized here (the complete document is available at the CWPA website):

- **Establish your exigence, and do it fast.** At the outset of your article, make sure your reader can easily tell what scholarly conversations you are speaking to and what your article proposes to add to them. It's hard to overstate just how quickly this exigence should be communicated at your article's outset; it's probably not the case, for instance, that seven paragraphs of literature review are necessary before you can even pose your research question or define the scope of your inquiry.
- **Get out of your own head.** *WPA's* audience is, of course, very scholarly and knowledgeable and they are familiar the broad contours of the field's literature. However, none of them are in the same head-space you are as a researcher. Be sure to keep your audience orientated to your particular research base by providing summaries and reminders of cited material as appropriate. In addition, do not rely on ellipsis and syllogism to carry your arguments: be overt with your claims and be demonstrative with your support for them. Your arguments should not be left as an exercise for the reader.
- **User test your work.** Show your work to one, two, or ten trusted colleagues with an invitation for them to provide serious, critical feedback.

- **Ignore this advice if the rhetorical situation demands it.** These are not edicts. We do not want cookie-cutter essays: the last thing we want is to homogenize and stultify the discourse of our field. These are merely reminders for you to think first about the readerly needs of *WPA*'s audience. Imagine your reader is a time-crunched *WPA*, an exhausted journal editor, a harried graduate student, etc. Even if your readers don't fall among this impatient bunch, they would probably still benefit from you assuming that they do.

## IN THIS ISSUE

As editors of *WPA*, we are mindful of the long and significant history of scholarly authorship and editing that precedes us. While the journal serves as a testament to the intellectual tradition and evolution of this organization, it can also act as a powerful vehicle for innovation, revolution, and disciplinary disruption. Although *WPA*'s publication process may be stodgy and slow by the standards of Twitter, Facebook, and *WPA-L*, we believe the articles in this issue represent the kinds of innovative, thought-provoking, and meaningful conversations about writing program administration that few other forums can foster.

This issue showcases a number of perspectives on the affective nature of our program work. William DeGenaro's essay "Kurt Cobain, Writing Program Administrator," details the emotional cost of program administration and demonstrates how Cobain's career trajectory "parallels with the trajectory of a writing program administrator." DeGenaro posits that "Cobain's career reveals how WPAs can conceive of inward and outward directed rage, irreverence, and a grungey consciousness as productive stances." Cindy Moore's article, "Mentoring WPAs for the Long Term: The Promise of Mindfulness" encourages us to engage in "mindfulness-based mentoring" as a way to counter administrative stress and promote success. And in Susan Miller-Cochran's CWPA plenary, "Innovation through Intentional Administration: Or, How to Lead a Writing Program Without Losing Your Soul," readers are encouraged to explore the possibilities of "compassionate administration" by identifying the guiding principles that direct our work. Also in this issue, Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Samantha Sturman advocate for "Reclaiming Writing Placement." These authors analyze national educational reforms and doubts about standardized testing, identifying this as a kairotic moment when WPAs can insert themselves into the conversation and promote more robust placement measures at their institutions. Carolyn A. Wisniewski analyzes results from her qualitative study of the "Problem-Setting and Problem-Solving Strategies of

Novice Teachers,” and demonstrates that these new graduate teaching assistants “rarely turned to disciplinary or programmatic resources to resolve challenges.” Wisniewski proposes a “detect-elect-connect model of transfer” to teach novice writing teachers how to “productively transfer learning from their pedagogy education to the classroom.” Finally, in “Give All Thoughts a Chance,” Sandie Friedman and Robert Miller report on the results of their survey of first-year writing students who were asked to respond to the “Research as Inquiry” dispositions in the Association of College Research Libraries *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Based on their results, these authors posit that WAW helped students to better “articulate their development as researchers and writers.”

The reviews in this issue draw attention to the many literacies at work in writing programs and how well our field is responding to multilingual students. They also ask us to consider how well our field is simultaneously addressing the labor conditions that constrain the work being done in these programs. In her review essay, “Languages and Literacies in Motion: Transnationalism and Mobility Matters in Writing Studies,” Nancy Bou Ayash reviews Steven Fraiberg, Xiqiao Wang, and Xiaoye You’s *Inventing the World Grant University* and Rebecca Lorimer Leonard’s *Writing on the Move* to examine “a nascent *trans* turn” toward “translinguality, transliteracy, transmodality, transculturalism, and transnationalism, to name a few” and how it affects “the mobility work ahead of us” as WPAs. Turning attention out to those in our writing programs who are interacting daily with this *trans* turn, “Rewriting Labor in Composition,” Meridith Reed’s review of *Labored*, an edited collection by Randall McClure, Dayna V. Goldstein, and Michael A. Pemberton, discusses how this book addresses labor concerns constraining writing programs and how our field can respond to these by revising its professional statements about labor. Narrowing in on a more student-focused view of the *trans* turn and how it affects writing programs, Marie Webb’s review “Viewing Directed Self-Placement Through a Multilingual, Multicultural, Transdisciplinary, and Ethical Lens” examines Tanita Saenkhum’s analysis of the use of directed self-placement (DSP) with multilingual writers. These reviews together show how writing program administration is becoming increasingly complex as a variety of forces work with and on writing programs.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During our first year as editors of *WPA*, we have been privileged to work with two smart, informed, and skilled graduate students. Katie McWain and Molly Ubessen’s work as assistant editors has set a high bar for the



assistant editors who follow them. Amy Cicchino also joined the *WPA* team last year, serving as our advertising manager. During her tenure in that role, Amy ambitiously secured new sponsors for the journal. We have asked her to continue her service to the journal this year as an assistant editor. Kelly Moreland also began her tenure as assistant editor with this issue, and we are delighted to be able to make use of her considerable editorial and administrative experience. Kelly and Amy played a central role in bringing this issue to press. Finally, we're delighted to welcome Kendra Andrews to the journal staff to serve as our ads manager this year. Please contact her (at [wpajournalads@gmail.com](mailto:wpajournalads@gmail.com)) if you're interested in advertising your program, press, workshop, or event in *WPA*.

Over the past year, we have also relied on the members of our editorial board for their advice and support. With this issue, we say goodbye to six members of the board whose service with us ended in spring. We are grateful for the good work and dedication of Michael Callaway, Asao Inoue, Laura Micciche, Chuck Paine, Ellen Schendel, and Elizabeth VanderLei. We are excited to welcome six new members to the editorial board: Beth Brunk-Chavez, Sheila Carter-Tod, Sarah Z. Johnson, Cheri Lemieux-Spiegel, Susan Thomas, and Chris Warnick. We are excited by the incredible range of expertise and experience represented by the editorial board and we are thankful for the generosity of those who have agreed to serve on it.

Finally, this journal would not be possible without the active and engaged membership of the CWPA. As a discipline of program administrators, we understand the role that secure resources play in maintaining vigorous institutions. Please help support the work of the council and this journal by checking your CWPA membership status on the CWPA website; if you are able to, please consider becoming a sustaining member of the organization.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

We are delighted to announce that E. Shelley Reid's article "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA" (vol. 40, no. 2) has been selected for inclusion in the 2018 edition of *The Best of the Journals in Rhetoric and Composition*.

#### WORKS CITED

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