

Inkshed

Newsletter of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning
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About Inkshed

From the Editors' Desktops

Reviews

Wendy Strachan, *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*
Margaret Procter

Wendy Strachan, *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*
Theresa Hyland

Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond
Tosh Tachino

Conferences

Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing
(formerly CATTW)
Carleton University, May 24-26 2009

Canadian Writing Centre Association at STHLE
University of New Brunswick, June 17 1:15-4pm

Contents

This issue was edited by Heather Graves and Roger Graves (University of Alberta). It is accessible through the Inkshed Web site, at <http://www.inkshed.ca>

About Inkshed . . .

This newsletter of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning (CASLL) provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use, particularly in the Canadian context. CASLL membership runs from January 1 to December 31 and includes a subscription to *Inkshed*. To subscribe, send a cheque, made out to "Inkshed," for \$40 [\$20 for students and the un(der)employed] to the following address:

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Subscribers are invited to submit items of interest related to the theory and practice of reading and writing. CASLL also has a website—www.stu.ca/inkshed—maintained by Russ Hunt.

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From the Editors' Desktops

This issue of the newsletter presents reviews of two important books published recently: Wendy Strachan's *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*, and *Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond*, edited by Natasha Artemeva and Aviva Freedman.

The two books offer important, even crucial, information and insights into two major aspects of the teaching of writing in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Strachan's book is particularly important for those of us who interact with disciplines outside of writing studies through tutoring sessions in writing centres, workshops for faculty, or presentations to classes on various aspects of academic writing. If you haven't had time to read Strachan's 290-page academic "murder mystery," then Margaret Procter's review is must reading. She does a wonderful job of summarizing the main aspects of the book and presenting a case for reading the entire book. Margaret's own perspective as the Coordinator of Writing Support at the University of Toronto provides her with a very experienced vantage point on the events Strachan narrates about the Centre for Writing Intensive Learning at Simon Fraser.

Theresa Hyland offers another review of Strachan's book, focusing on how *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum* offers a wonderful description and many valuable tools for creating a writing across the curriculum or writing in the disciplines program at other post-secondary institutions. Theresa's own experiences researching writing assignments across the curriculum at her own institution, her work developing writing courses, and her work running a writing centre position her well to comment on how writing intensive learning could work at a 1,000 student institution.

Tosh Tachino's review of *Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond* gives a thorough overview of the development of rhetorical genre studies (RGS), an important approach to the study of discourse. Tosh's work to distill the essence of RGS and place this approach to studying writing in the context of approaches from the latter part of the 20th century is reason enough to read this review. The questions he raises—such as "How far should we be willing to depart from the study of language?"—are important ones, questions that we hope spark some discussion on the CASLL listserv.

Roger Graves

Heather Graves

Review of Wendy Strachan, Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum

Margaret Procter

Wendy Strachan, *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008). xiii, 290 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-703-2 (hard cover) and 978-0-87421-704-9 (e-book).

This is the book we've been waiting for, even though we knew it wouldn't tell quite the story we wanted to hear. Wendy Strachan's account of the university-wide writing initiative at Simon Fraser University from 1999 to 2007 is an impressive achievement—an adventure narrative for its tales of risk and experimentation, a roman à clef for its cast of named and unnamed personalities and its events mentioned but left unexplained, a concise and readable scholarly text for its account of current issues in writing, a compendium of teaching and research models, and a forthright and sophisticated analysis of results. It's also a murder mystery, with a death hinted at from the start and narrated in detail in the final chapter, but with some indications throughout that the victim may still be alive after all.

Strachan has made the most of her chance to depict the project that she led until her planned retirement in August 2005. The commission to write this book as a post-retirement project was part of the agreement that brought her back to SFU in 2002 after some time in the wilderness of Bellingham, Washington (that's one of the unexplained events). It's impossible to avoid thinking that the administration may later have regretted its agreement to have the story told. After thanking various supporters in her Acknowledgements, Strachan notes without comment that the office of the associate vice-president academic "offered corrections and redactions" (x) to the final chapter. Strachan has clearly evaded the effects of such offers. The constraints of writing about recent events in her home institution do not stop her from telling truth to and about power.

Although the book gives voice to a number of participants in the initiative, it is very much Strachan's monograph. Until Nancy Sommers puts her work at Harvard between covers, it is the only single-authored book about a university writing initiative rather than a collection like the ones from Hawaii (Hilgers *et al.*, 1999), Cornell (Monroe, 2002), and Minnesota (Anson, 2002). Strachan's personal involvement from the first course experiment in 1999 to the "dismantling" of the project by 2007 makes this book indeed "writing intensive" in nature as well as title. Even with some names and background events obscured, the excitement, struggle, and disappointments of the experience come through dramatically. Strachan uses a range of modes to present her account of university politics and pressures, most notably a "faculty forum" or "constructed dialogue" based on a dinner meeting among the ten initial course collaborators. Guided by Strachan as interlocutor, the discussion ranges through a series of highly-charged topics concerning the university's culture around the value of writing. The discussion is voiced by a cast of

named speakers, listed at the start by their faculty roles, who give their ideas openly and strongly. Chapter 7 is not quite the *Symposium*, or the *Decameron* either, but it is an effective way of presenting frank opinions about the shortcomings of an institution that sponsored and then undercut a program that for a few years seemed to be transforming ideas about the place of writing in university teaching and learning.

The book concentrates on the years 2002-4 when the Centre for Writing-Intensive Learning (CWIL), staffed by several writing specialists, held a mandate to develop new ideas for integrating writing instruction into courses. Its final chapter outlines the years when it was disbanded and replaced by a dispersed model for meeting the new institutional requirement for departments to offer W (writing-intensive) courses. Strachan's account of the exciting events unfolding at the course level is inevitably slowed down by the need to present the institutional context. The first chapter, outlining with a touch of skepticism the commitment to teaching on which SFU was founded and also its tradition of powerful departments, is enlivened by a cogent narrative about working with an eminent professor of Philosophy to integrate "writing to learn" into his courses. Strachan notes modestly that others at the university paid attention to this transformation of a senior professor's ideas about the connection between writing and thinking, and it is clear that admiration for their experiment encouraged the university to opt for writing-intensive courses through the curriculum rather than the original plans for generic or discipline-specific writing courses. Strachan also describes the cross-disciplinary initiatives led by Janet Giltrow in the former Centre for Research in Academic Writing (Department of English, 1996-9) that gave a foundation for this choice, though she does not attempt to explain the sudden closure of the Centre or comment on the departure of Giltrow for UBC.

The second chapter takes us through the formalization of the requirements for the "W"-designated courses. As an outsider to SFU, I found it hard to decode the acronyms and track the task forces and their reports and resolutions. However, I enjoyed Strachan's point-by-point analysis showing the year-long revision of the official statement of criteria for certifying these courses. Not only did phrases like "appropriate feedback" become more specific, but university structures changed, with the establishment of an entrance test and a new foundational skills course alongside the new wording affirming that the W courses would teach disciplinary genres "in ways that are clearly distinguished from remedial and foundational skills courses" (46). With Strachan's comments on the reasons for choices in the wording of the policy, this is a valuable case study of institutional discourse. The middle pages of Chapter 2 also set out a fine literature review of the rhetorical and pedagogical theory that Strachan sees as justifying the new approach to teaching and learning. Her expositions of rhetorical genre theory and of current thinking about response and rubrics are models of brief exposition, serving (along with a similar section in the Introduction that reviews the WAC/WID movement) as welcome reminders that there is a coherent body of thinking and empirical research on the full range of issues for which institutions need writing policies. Strachan does not claim that the committee members were aware of the theory or asked her to explain it to them in detail, but the conjunction of her understanding and their power to act on it makes this a very hopeful chapter.

In Chapters 3 to 6, Strachan's accounts of the course pilot projects that preceded the W implementation give a dynamic picture of well-grounded ideas being tested in the realities of university life. Led by Strachan and employing two and eventually four other highly-committed writing specialists, the Centre for Writing-Intensive Learning had the scope to act and the freedom of mind to experiment. Strachan insists that the pilot projects were matters of "stumbling" (66) or "bushwhacking" (191) to create paths that others could follow. Her layering of different perspectives, including narratives and reflections and statistical measures of outcomes, yields an honest depiction of real problems: not just the difficulty of finding qualified TAs, as many had feared, or even of enlisting enough willing faculty members, but also the challenge of combining good advice on assignment design with an accurate sense of what one can reasonably ask novice disciplinary writers to do in an assignment graded by TAs.

Strachan's thorough interviews with faculty members give her material for reflection as well as narration. She can frame each analysis with an account of underlying assumptions and values, both personal and disciplinary, all relating back to and enriching the theoretical concepts outlined previously. Her approach as a faculty consultant was to identify the characteristics of a disciplinary genre that faculty members could recognize as part of their learning goals for the course, then to help them design writing-related activities to let students take on the role of disciplinary spokespersons as well as to master formal features in the identified genres. Course instructors and teaching assistants also had to adapt to new roles as facilitators and coaches rather than just providers and assessors of knowledge. Ranging through courses across the disciplines, these examples give clear snapshots of inventive approaches and clear thinking about results. The richest study depicts an early Biology project, incorporating nuanced reflections by both the course instructor and the lead course teaching assistant about the flawed first experiment and their own new awareness of writing as a tool for learning. It is no accident that the TA has since gone on to become a writing consultant herself.

The book is also valuable as a record of the research potential for such a university-wide initiative. From the early stages, the Centre for Writing-Intensive Learning aimed to design and conduct research measuring the effects of the new instructional methods. The book fulfils some of this mandate in its presentation of qualitative research. Not only does it report interviews with faculty and TAs in interestingly varied modes, it also sets out tables and charts showing the results of well-designed student questionnaires administered to both individual classes and large cohorts of students. Sadly, the most impressive of these results was produced after CWIL had been disbanded. The scores from 1600 pairs of pre- and post-course surveys designed largely by CWIL were analysed statistically in Summer 2007 by the teaching-support office where the project had been placed after its own research mandate was withdrawn. The chart on page 223 shows clear rises in self-rating of writing skills by students who had taken W courses, and much higher gains in those who had taken courses providing explicit scaffolding designed by the now-defunct CWIL. The book's twelve Appendices include various nuanced and carefully-structured survey instruments for both faculty and students. Though not well-enough labelled as to where they were used originally, these instruments are contributions to research knowledge in themselves.

I found the results of this qualitative research entirely convincing as validations of the Simon Fraser version of WAC or WID, but was also hoping for some "hard evidence" about program effectiveness of the type that would impress a tough-minded administration. From the start, CWIL collected samples of student work, along with drafts and revisions and also student and faculty observations on the process, with the aim of conducting systematic analyses of changes in writing and learning. Sadly, like many others in her situation, Strachan notes that "Such research required time not available to us" (221). The only analysis of text was a small study of answers written in an exam situation for the Biology course described in Chapter 4, comparing work by classes before and after the writing initiative. The grades of students who had taken the W course rose by a statistically valid count of 20% on this question (from an average of 5 to 6 out of 10), closely correlated to scores on the thinking components of the analysis and on some of the writing qualities sought. Strachan's brief discussion of the writing category defined as "authorship" is fascinating in itself (115-6). However, the clearest hard number to answer the question about improvement in formal qualities of writing is that students who had taken the W courses wrote 16% more words in the test answer, rising from an average of 181 to 212 words. Somehow that is a disappointing figure to take away from the account of the inventive and sensitive work done in the projects described here. Strachan is generous in providing copies of key instruments used in this research component, including excellent adaptations of Bloom's and Bigg's taxonomies to define the desired qualities of thinking, writing, and course-content learning (Bigg's alone would have been enough, she notes) as well as her rubric for writing qualities. The methods outlined in Chapter 4 and Appendix 6 will give others a chance to complete the aims of this type of study, analysing student text in terms of institutional goals and also aligning results with qualitative data about attitudes and self-efficacy. It would be satisfying to see the first such success come from SFU using material collected originally by Strachan and her colleagues at CWIL.

The final chapter, "Through Transition in Search of Stability," must have been excruciatingly difficult to write. It is certainly painful to read. The bureaucratic acronyms weigh heavily here: CWIL becomes WILO and is sent from FASS to LDIC while the WSG stands by as the UCIC (once the UCITF) operates the machinery for W-course requirements. By Spring 2005 the once autonomous unit of leadership and research has been redefined as a unit of teaching support (an Office rather than a Centre) that has to operate under the supervision of the Learning and Instructional Development Centre, a partnership where both sides learn that they have less in common than hoped or assumed. In August 2005 Wendy Strachan retires as planned, observing events as she writes this book on her post-retirement contract, but lacking power to act or advise. An acting director from within the unit and then an interim director from Education (neither named here) are put temporarily into her position. In September 2006, the requirement for writing-intensive courses comes into effect, and the bureaucratic rules to enforce it create their own dynamic of institutional power and resistance. Although the departments have to accept the centrally-imposed requirement to offer W courses, they can and do refuse the opportunity to co-appoint the (unnamed) person found by a search committee to serve as Wendy's successor. In December 2006, the central administration takes this refusal as a cue to disperse the remaining members of the former unit, making them advisors to separate faculties; most immediately leave for greener fields. Meanwhile, the long-

awaited Writing Centre for students has been revived, but as part of student services, not of the W initiative. By early 2007, the hub of innovative ideas and practice has become a decentralized set of positions with a mandate for service rather than curriculum development or research, lacking leadership and without a presence in university governance.

This final chapter thoroughly answers the inevitable question about what went wrong. Once again, Strachan makes the most of the chance to reflect and analyse. Her use of a general framework for the analysis makes this chapter bracing reading for anyone involved in similar projects. The framework is built on two sources, Marty Townsend's list of factors for success in W courses (in McLeod, 2002), and a list of stages for program development prepared by Bill Condon of Washington State for a presentation at SFU in June 2006, two months before the W requirement there came into effect. The irony of that timing does not need underlining. Strachan uses the categories from these lists as headings for a summative account of the SFU program. To an extent she may not realize, the analysis itself is a measure of the program's contributions to knowledge. It looks at the big picture of institutional positioning as well as the types of strategies for teaching and learning, and it sets out the methods and preliminary results for course and program research.

Nearly all of the measures validate the SFU efforts for course-by-course development: the program formulated the definition of W courses clearly, incorporated good curriculum design and excellent teaching methods into a wide range of pilot projects, and collected useful information about student reactions to W courses. Some of the institutional measures also show success: courses included more writing and more instruction on writing compared to those in the pre-W period, faculty came in good numbers to workshops about writing-intensive learning, and a system for TA training was in operation. The problems of positioning, however, were evident from the beginning. Besides the lack of office staff and the insecure contracts of the other consultants in CWIL and WILO, Strachan's own leadership position was always "under construction," and she was sometimes inadvertently left out of administrative communications. The official mandate for CWIL that included its research function was never recognized by the University Curriculum Implementation Committee that controlled implementation of the W-course requirements. I would also add that the lack of a student writing centre after English abandoned it left the work of the writing team isolated from faculty colleagues and outside student awareness. There is a noticeable silence about any support from English, though Cheryl Amundsen of Education is introduced as champion of a proposal for a research institute on teaching and learning in the disciplines and then as chair of a committee on program assessment (both ideas neglected by administration at the time, though the Institute has since been approved and funded for startup). The lack of easily publicized empirical results for student improvement may also have played a role in the ease with which the central administration accepted the collapse of the original plans. Strachan emphasizes repeatedly in Chapters 3 to 6 that she strove to make her own work with courses invisible so that the initiative would become part of the expected teaching in the disciplines, but it would seem that invisibility also became a liability.

Near the end of the book Strachan quotes Chris Anson about the comparable collapse of the Minnesota Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, lamenting with him "how

easily all the things that have taken so much negotiation, planning and hard work are dismantled" (234). Her Epilogue goes on to express the brave hope that the book will "leave evidence of what is still possible" (244). There is some reason to join her in that hope. Imperfect though it is, the current structure at SFU has achieved much already: a functioning system for certifying courses and introducing faculty and TAs to a range of new teaching methods, a history of success in transforming thinking about writing and learning in a sizeable cohort of active and influential faculty members, plans for a research institute influenced by ideas from the writing initiatives, and now a written record that presents and analyses the experience in terms inviting further discussion. In drawing attention to both the successes and the failures of the SFU initiative, the book testifies to the maturity of ideas about writing in Canada. Now the rest of us only have to come up with better stories about the integration of writing programs into university structures.

Review of Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum

Theresa Hyland ✍

Wendy Strachan, *Writing Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008). xiii, 290 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-703-2 (hard cover) and 978-0-87421-704-9 (e-book).

In a recent article entitled “What do We Want from Books” (Sept. 2008) published in *College Composition and Communication*, Peter Mortensen makes the point that many books are written because they provide academic cache to the writers as tokens of intellectual achievement in the tenure and promotion stakes. Two considerations make him ask the question: First, until recently publications in composition studies have been in the form of articles and even now are usually collections of articles on a particular topic. Secondly, books as we know them may soon become redundant. He suggests “As a first step if we can arrive at some sense of how books currently contribute to the circulation of disciplinary knowledge, we can steady ourselves for the next step: adapting books as we understand them to the emergent possibilities” (p. 196).

When I first picked up Strachan’s book to read, I thought I would be reading a cautionary tale about how impossible it is to have writing instruction taken seriously by administrations in large universities. The fact that writing courses and a writing centre were apparently disbanded at SFU in favour of a “writing in the disciplines” approach to the teaching of writing to undergraduate students had me worried that the book would be just one more testament to how misunderstood writing theory and instructional practice are in universities in Canada today. Depressing material to sit down with on a cold winter’s day! What I actually read was an inspiring tale of how the SFU writing in the disciplines initiative, under the careful guidance of Strachan, and the help of a small cadre of dedicated writing instructors, became a carefully crafted, intelligently delivered program that brought members of faculties as diverse as biology, psychology, philosophy and economics together in collaborative discussions about writing instruction in content classrooms. By fall 2006, 72 professors were teaching writing-intensive courses after a preparatory and pilot period of only 4 years. These professors represented at least 31 departments across SFU and the courses taught serviced more than 5000 students (Strachan, p. 206). Quite an impressive accomplishment by any standards! So, why this book?

Strachan starts her account of the initiative by setting the historical context of writing instruction at SFU, introducing us to the administrative proponents of Writing in the Disciplines and articulating her mandate as the Director of the newly-formed CWIL (Centre for Writing-Intensive Learning). Strachan is well aware that for any initiate to gain credibility and permanence within the academic community, it must have sound theoretical underpinnings, and these she sets out in Chapter Two. Strachan’s firm grasp

of writing theory helped guide the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee through the process of devising five criteria by which courses would be judged to be WI (writing-intensive). They were revised after extensive consultation with departments who were willing to give feedback about the initiative. The resulting criteria could form a model for any WAC/ WID program. WI courses would be those that (1) offer students frequent opportunities to use writing as a way of learning, (2) use exemplars of a particular genre as a means of teaching students how to write in the discipline; (3) give appropriate feedback to students about their writing; (4) assign a significant amount of the course grade to writing and (5) provide opportunities to the students for revision of their writing.

Perhaps the most interesting sections of the book are those that deal with the implementation of the criteria in the creation of new WI courses. In dealing with Faculty, Strachan positions herself as a collaborative but well-informed specialist who is willing to disappear when no longer needed. She describes in great detail the selection of faculty to engage in pilot WI courses, the mentoring of those professors to help them incorporate writing assignments that would meet the WI criteria, and the workshops that their TA's attended to help them teach the skills that students would need in order to successfully complete the writing assignments. In Chapter 5, Strachan describes, in case-study format, the consultative process of creating the WI courses in four different disciplines; in Chapter 6 several of the faculty reflect on their experience of creating and implementing a WI course; and in Chapter 7 she allows 13 members of faculty to discuss, in "forum format," the institutional context and the barriers that it presents for the WI initiative. Faculty voice their fears about introducing the initiative to their students, their inexperience in scaffolding writing tasks, their worries that the marking load, the lack of TAs who would be able to teach writing to the students, and the lack of institutional rewards for taking on WI courses. Strachan argues that this last worry is perhaps the most serious barrier to recruiting and keeping professors interested in developing and teaching WI courses, since the tenure system still values research over teaching and extra time devoted to teaching and marking WI courses would mean less time to do research in their disciplines. Students too, struggle with an increased workload and increased demands on their cognitive processing skills. Is the process successful in the end? Like the skilled teacher that she is, Strachan lets us come to our own conclusions after presenting the evidence.

I found Strachan's final chapter a bit of a disappointment. Here she evaluates the effect of administrative changes that were made just before the WI initiative was introduced as a program requirement across the SFU campus. This material is certainly as important as the material presented in the rest of the book, but I found the format confusing and repetitive. Strachan's introduction of Condon's (2006) four stages on a continuum of successful integration of programs and Townsend's (2001) characteristics of successful programs forces her to re-introduce much of the material she has already discussed. This is largely unnecessary, I feel, as the evaluation of how the program might serve the broader interests of the academic writing community could be tackled in a more straightforward manner. Further, the book was written immediately after the events it describes and took little over a year to complete. It was brought to press in early 2008. This haste has not always worked to the benefit of the text. There seem to be errors in

some of her tables (I found the material on pp. 82 and 83 confusing), and there are some unclear sentence structures and organizational problems in the text.

“Writing Intensive” has so much to say about best practices in developing a WID program that these flaws can be overlooked. Strachan’s prodigious quantitative and qualitative data-collection and careful analysis and articulation of the findings make the discussion credible and immediately accessible. In the end, she does more than just reaffirm good mentoring practice and praise faculty and students who are willing to take risks in the name of academic enhancement. She also shows how administrative carelessness can waste the time and talent of its staff, and how the real losers when this happens are faculty and, ultimately, the students that they teach. I am the Director of Writing Services at my institution. We don’t have a WID program, but reading this book has convinced me of the value—indeed the necessity—for writing staff to assume a mentoring role (“visibly and invisibly?”) towards writing across the curriculum. Strachan no longer has to worry about academic cache, but the members of the academy who are involved in the administration and teaching of writing programs have much to gain from her book. How can we adapt it to “emergent possibilities?” I have some ideas on this score—perhaps it should be the subject of a collaborative discussion online!

Review: Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond

Tosh Tachino ✍️

Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond. Natasha Artemeva and Aviva Freedman (eds.).
Winnipeg: Inkshed Publications, 2006.

In the past twenty years rhetorical genre studies (RGS) has explored a number of important areas, such as disciplinary writing in the university, workplace writing, and the connection between the two. Beginning in the eighties, genre scholars started to characterize disciplinary writing (e.g., Herrington, 1985; McCarthy, 1987), but from the mid nineties, some genre scholars started to focus more on the perceived mismatch between what the university prepares their students for in workplace writing and what is actually required in the workplace (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994). This line of inquiry culminated in Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré's (1999) book-length discussion that academic writing and workplace writing are worlds apart. This conclusion left us with the question of what universities can and should do to prepare students for the demands of workplace writing. Like other recent scholarly work in rhetorical genre studies (Dias & Paré, 2000; Smart & Brown, 2002), *Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond* is an anthology that follows this scholarly tradition, responds to these questions, and explores the future directions of RGS.

To this end, the anthology includes a bibliographical essay that orients newcomers to RGS, theoretical discussions that explore our current thinking on genres and possible future directions, and three case studies that exemplify the usefulness of RGS, including two case studies that explain how universities may prepare students for workplace communication.

The first chapter, "Approaches To Learning Genres: A Bibliographical Essay" by Artemeva, enumerates and explains many of the concepts that many genre scholars find useful. She begins with Miller's (1984/1994) definition of genre as social action and synthesizes some of the key developments, such how genres can construct reality (Bawarshi, 2000), how they change (Bakhtin, 1986; Schryer, 1999), and how they interact with other genres (Bazerman, 1994; Devitt, 1991, 2000; Spinuzzi, 2004; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002). In addition, Artemeva introduces concepts and theories, such as rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968), Bakhtin's addressivity, chronotope, dialogism, utterance (Bakhtin, 1986), speech act (Austin, 1962), uptake (Freadman, 1994, 2002), activity theory (Engeström, 1987, Leont'ev, 1981) and its evolution, Vygotskian zone of development and internalization/externalization (Vygotsky, 1981), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) .

The second chapter, "Interaction between Theory and Research: RGS and a Study of Students and Professionals Working 'in Computers'" by Freedman, defines the boundary of RGS by comparing it to the Australian approach to genres. Like her earlier essay on this topic (Freedman, 1994), Freedman characterizes the Australian view of genre as

more static, focusing more on classifying and codifying linguistic features of a genre at a particular time (thus, synchronic). By comparison, Freedman describes RGS as more dynamic as it is more interested in capturing how genres change (thus, diachronic).

The third chapter, “Pushing the Envelope: Expanding the Model of RGS Theory” by Freedman, identifies weaknesses in RGS and suggests how the theory can evolve to remedy those weaknesses. These weaknesses stem from the fact that RGS draws from the rhetorical tradition that focuses on the pragmatic aspect of a discourse (Bitzer, 1968). Thus, RGS has trouble analyzing texts that do not seem to be carrying out any obvious (official) transactions, such as obscure jokes that are inserted in a computer programming code and some private logs that an office worker scribbles on the back of her notebook. This problem is similar to the one that was noted by Spinuzzi and Zachry (2000), who proposed that we need a new concept (namely *genre ecology*) to account for individual improvisations and other unofficial genres. But unlike Spinuzzi and Zachry, Freedman argues that the concepts we need to address this problem already exist. She specifically points to the work of Jacobson (1960), Britton (1970), and Langer (1942), including Britton's distinction between "poetic" and "transactional" writing and Langer's argument that a human being has a primary impulse to symbolize and this impulse needs to be taken into account when we analyze language.

The fourth chapter—“You Are How You Cite: Citing Patient Information In Health Care Settings” by Schryer, Campbell, Spafford, and Lingard—examines the role of citation in transforming oral narratives into professional data. Using their case studies of medical students and social work students, Schryer and her colleagues identify different uses and status of direct and indirect quotations between medical case presentations and social work case presentations. In medicine, medical students are taught to distinguish signs (what the patient says) and symptoms (what medical practitioners observe), and they use direct quotes and other reporting expressions (e.g. "the mother says...") to mark a potentially unreliable statement. By comparison, social work values the verbatim expression of their clients, so social workers use direct quotations to highlight important issues. Schryer et al. suggest that this difference may be the source of misunderstanding and frustration between the two fields, and medical practitioners may not take social workers' reports seriously because they contain too many direct quotations, which signify unreliability in the medical field.

The fifth chapter, “A Time to Speak, a Time to Act: A Rhetorical Genre Analysis of a Novice Engineer's Calculated Risk Taking” by Artemeva, documents a case study of a novice engineer who successfully improvised a rhetorical strategy based on his learning from a technical writing class. In this case, the novice engineer was frustrated by his senior colleague who did not seem to welcome his ideas and the engineering culture that did not seem to value good communication. Instead of conforming to the existing practice and genres (of uninspiring presentations), the new engineer decided to appeal to the upper management, which gave him an opportunity to present his implementation plans. Using various techniques from the technical communication class (such as audience analysis, audience accommodation), the novice engineer crafted a presentation that impressed the upper management, and he was promoted to a director position. Through this case study,

Artemeva explores larger theoretical issues, such as implementing new genres as a novice, rhetorical agency, kairos, and cultural capital, and how these theoretical concepts may help us construct technical communication courses that students can use throughout their academic and professional careers.

The last chapter, “Developing a 'Discursive Gaze': Participatory Action Research with Student Interns Encountering New Genres in the Activity of the Workplace” by Smart and Brown, illustrates the ways in which a participatory action research in a classroom can facilitate and improve student interns' learning and experience. In this case study, 24 student interns were taught to become self-reflective ethnographers, and they were provided with theories, coaching, and prompts to study the intern sites as they worked. One student, for example, learned the importance of the historical aspect of a site through activity theory and discovered "foundation notes" in his intern sites that documented the history of his current project before he joined the team, allowing him to function more effectively. The combination of theory and the intern experience led another student to be aware of the institutional power and the problematic place of interns in that power relationship. Through coaching in the classroom, this student learned to assert herself tactfully and found a way for others in her workplace to respect the value of her professional contribution.

The anthology is valuable in a number of respects. For example, Artemeva's bibliographical essay is particularly useful as a brief introduction to RGS, and I can see it used as a graduate course reading. The two chapters by Freedman clarify the theoretical issues for genre scholars, and her suggestions for future directions offer specifics as we debate where RGS should go next. Given Freedman's argument about RGS's weaknesses and potential remedies, the three case studies are particularly fitting as each illustrates a different aspect of RGS. The case study by Schryer et al. exemplifies how students are initiated into the workplace, and how they acquire a particular discursive practice (use of reported speech in this case). By comparison, Artemeva's chapter focuses on how a newcomer defies the existing genres and how he managed to do so successfully. Although Artemeva does not use any of the theorists Freedman suggests in chapter 3, her study captures the newcomer's private intentions, and how they contribute to the changes in that workplace, thus exemplifying Freedman's description of RGS in chapter 2. Smart and Brown's case study fits somewhere between Schryer et al.'s study and Artemeva's in that students in their study both learned to adopt the existing genres but also learned to negotiate changes. Together, these chapters create a coherent argument about what RGS is good at and what RGS can potentially be good at doing.

But in light of these laudable qualities, however, I wonder if the book focused too much on the dynamic aspect of the genre and was too quick to dismiss the stabilizing aspect of the genre that can be part of RGS. It is true that until recently genre theorists tended to focus on the social constructionist force that compels rhetors to conform (Winsor, 1999), so perhaps Freedman's emphasis may be justified. Yet, as Artemeva reiterates in her first chapter, Miller's (1984) definition of genre (and her reference to Giddens's structuration theory) carefully balances the social constructionist force and the potential agency of individuals to change the social structure. Schryer's (1993) later definition of "stabilized-

for-now" (also discussed in Artemeva's first chapter) emphasizes the destabilizing force but it still acknowledges the other part of the equation. This balance is important because if we assume any description of genres to be too ephemeral, we might accidentally undermine the value of such work as Schryer et al.'s analysis. The discursive patterns they discovered in medicine and social work will certainly change at some point in the future, but we'd expect their findings to be "stabilized-for-now" and thus valuable on their own.

This observation also made me wonder about the extent to which language description and analysis should be a part of RGS. In Chapter 2, Freedman does not explicitly rule them out, but she seems to regard them as belonging more to the Sydney school. The three case studies in this volume send a mixed message on this issue: Schryer et al.'s study clearly describes and analyzes language data. Smart and Brown, on the other hand, mention textual regularities, and their reference to Paré and Smart (1994) implies that textual regularities are still relevant to genre (even though their point is that genre is more than just textual regularities). Yet, their case study does not involve any analysis of discursive data. Similarly, Artemeva's study does not contain any analyses of discursive data. While such an issue may not be a central topic of this book, it raises some important questions, such as: How far should we be willing to depart from the study of language? At what point does a study of the context cease to be a rhetorical study and become a study of another other discipline (such as anthropology, sociology, politics, organization behavior)? Perhaps future work in RGS may address this issue.

Overall, this anthology is important for any genre scholar who wants to stay current in theory and research. But the book may also appeal to technical communication teachers who seek theoretical and empirical validations for what they teach. After all, the case studies in this volume illustrate that the work we do makes a difference.

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Conferences/Blog

The Territoire/Places of Writing Studies in Higher Education: Canadian and International Perspectives

Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
May 24-26, 2009

Keynote Speakers:

Judy Segal, University of British Columbia

Chris Thaiss, University of California at Davis

Kay O'Halloran, National University of Singapore

The Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing/Association canadienne de rédaction (CASDW/ACR; formerly Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW)/L'Association canadienne de professeurs de rédaction technique et scientifique (ACPRTS)) invites you to attend its interdisciplinary international conference "The Territoire/Places of Writing Studies in Higher Education: Canadian and International Perspectives," to be held in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, from May 24-26, 2009 in collaboration with the 2009 Congress of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS).

Rationale for the Conference

In line with the Congress theme of "Capital Connections: nation, terroir, territoire," the CASDW/ACR conference seeks to identify, interrogate, and illuminate the various locations—physical, administrative, and intellectual—that form our identities as instructors, tutors, and researchers in writing studies.

This theme is particularly apt because of the change in name of our organization. The old name—Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW)/L'Association canadienne de professeurs de rédaction technique et scientifique (ACPRTS)—signified a territory or place for our activities limited to one location in the academy—technical writing—that ultimately proved insufficient as the group's intellectual territory expanded. The new name claims a broader section of the academic map: genre studies, rhetorical theory, composition studies, engineering communication, writing centre theory and practice, and, of course, professional and technical writing research and practice.

At the same time that CATTW/ACPRTS became CASDW/ACR, writing studies researchers and teachers located in writing centres, learning commons, and academic support divisions have formed a new organization—the Canadian Writing Centre Association—that identifies the "territoire" they work in. We invite presentations that investigate the nature of this territory: its administrative aspects, its intellectual locations, and its professional aspirations.

Canadian Writing Centres and Student Writing Special Interest Group (SIG) Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, June 17
University of New Brunswick
1:15pm – 4:00pm

CSSR Conference 2009

July 20-25
McGill University

The CSSR will meet in Montréal with the International Society for the History of Rhetoric (ISHR) in July 2009 (at McGill University), instead of with the Congress of the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences, as is usual. We've made available a very preliminary breakdown of the schedule, as well as our call for papers. When details of registration and fees are finalized, you will find the information posted on the ISHR website.

Canadian Blogs about Writing

Tania Smith's EduRhetor
<http://edurhetor.wordpress.com/>