Theorizing WAC Faculty Development in Multimodal Project Design

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Abstract: This article addresses why and how to support faculty working with student writers on multimodal projects at all levels across the disciplines. The authors argue that faculty need support in the design, implementation, and assessment of multimodal projects so that students are better positioned to transfer writing knowledge and (multimodal) composing practices throughout and beyond their undergraduate careers. Building upon recent scholarship on transfer and multimodality, in concert with Anne Beaufort's (2007) conception of knowledge domains from which successful writers draw, a framework is presented for implementing theory-driven WAC faculty development in multimodal assignment design. The authors conclude by summarizing faculty responses to engagement with these theories at a workshop session, describing multimodal assignments created by faculty, and sharing an assignment design guide that scaffolds the development of multimodal projects.

[O]ne might ask: "I grant you that the text makes sound, but is it also sound in the sense of being purposeful, rigorously crafted, or soundly constructed?"…"Is the theory supporting this work really sound?"

— Jody Shipka, "Sound Engineering: Toward a Theory of Multimodal Soundness"

Adam Banks (2015), in his conference address as Chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, considered the necessity of retiring the essay—of the need "to promote the essay to dominant genre emeritus"—in favor of exploring changing literacies and their importance in multimodal and multigenre communication. While this is a laudable promotion—inspiring even—doing so within the context of a Writing Across the Curriculum program poses particular challenges when working with faculty who are entrenched in primarily alphabetic text-based disciplinary writing traditions and demand sound theorization to be convinced of good reasons to design and implement multimodal projects that diverge from the dominant genres of their fields. At Moravian College, faculty across disciplines teach writing within First-Year Writing Seminar (FYWS) and other general education and discipline-specific writing-enriched contexts as is common at small liberal arts colleges (Gladstein & Rossman-Regaignon, 2012). Because on average under 15% of FYWS sections at Moravian are taught by writing specialists, our goal for faculty development is to introduce writing studies praxes to the broader campus community so that faculty can bring this knowledge to both their FYWS and upper-division courses.[1] We have found that framing faculty conversations about writing pedagogy around the connection between transfer of writing knowledge and abilities and the

building of metacognition around genre difference has been a particularly effective rhetorical strategy for helping faculty to understand and appreciate the need for students to engage with disciplinary knowledge in multiple genres, both as readers and writers. Faculty from across disciplines have been intrigued by the pedagogical possibilities afforded by positioning students as critical consumers and creators of multimodal texts, oftentimes for audiences beyond the classroom. In this article we share our theorization of the process of designing meaningful multimodal writing projects promoting our writing program's transfer-centric mission to our colleagues across the arts, humanities, social science, natural science, and health science disciplines represented at our college.

Promoting Transfer in a WAC Context

Though the process of producing primarily alphabetic text in a specific genre can be an effective way to help students build proficiency with academic writing, critical thinking, and information literacy skills, the traditional research essay so often assigned in first-year writing is also (justifiably) criticized for being an inauthentic "mutt genre" (Wardle, 2009)—a product that is divorced from both the reading and writing that most people do in their personal and professional lives. When we—in our capacities of director of writing (Crystal) and writing center coordinator (Meg) at a small liberal arts college—began redesigning the writing program at Moravian College in 2016, we saw an opportunity to frame conversations about writing pedagogy and writing project design in ways that de-emphasized the mutt genres that many faculty (ourselves included) were assigning at the time. We instead focused on aligning the FYWS outcomes more closely with the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0)" (2014). This involved considering the ways that the new FYWS outcomes could articulate with discipline-relevant writing curricula (developed for writing-intensive courses and within Writing-Enriched Curriculum-opted academic units[2]) and promote projects that were tied to specific rhetorical exigencies and genres that could be generalizable by students as they iteratively developed a transfer-oriented "meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies" (Wardle, 2007, p. 82) in different disciplinary contexts. The larger goal of our revisions became the fostering of writing transfer, ultimately helping our students emerge from the college with greater rhetorical flexibility.

These revisions ran parallel to and in some ways were supported by two institution-wide factors: 1) becoming an all-MacBook Pro and iPad campus in Fall 2014 whereby incoming undergraduates were given this technology (meaning that by Fall 2017 all full-time undergraduate students had the same tech to use in their classes) and 2) a Mellon Foundation grant to implement digital storytelling in humanities courses awarded in Fall 2014 and funded from Spring 2015 to Summer 2017.[3] These changes incentivized faculty to assign digital, multimodal projects in courses across the disciplines; our own pedagogical practices led us both to implement podcast-inspired soundwriting projects in our FYWS courses. From programmatic assessment of the grant—specifically analysis of writing assignments from faculty who received course development stipends—we recognized that successful digital, multimodal projects share important characteristics, many of which revolve around the rhetorical situation defined by the project (or, in some cases, elements of the rhetorical situation that students were prompted to explicitly define for their own projects). This prompted us to create additional faculty development opportunities to support the design of thoughtful, rhetorically sound multimodal projects by presenting a modified version of Anne Beaufort's (1999; 2007) knowledge domains heuristic.

Theoretical Framework for Faculty Development on Multimodality

"Successful writing transfer requires transforming or repurposing prior knowledge (even if only slightly) for a new context to adequately meet the expectations of new audiences and fulfill new purposes for writing."

— Jessie L. Moore, "Five Essential Principles about Writing Transfer"

Potentially meaningful multimodal projects across the curriculum provide opportunities to use aural, gestural, spatial, visual, and alphabetic modes to make discipline-specific arguments for members of that discipline's discourse community and to translate those arguments and related concepts for audiences representing discourse communities beyond the boundaries of a discipline, especially in disciplines that do not typically write outside of a small insular genre set (i.e., the most common genres used to communicate within a discourse community). However, as Lindsay Ann Sabatino and Brenta Blevins (2018), note about their approach to faculty development in multimodal composing, "[f]ew instructors have the preparation or experience to incorporate assignments and instruction using literacies in addition to the alphabetic" (p. 125). We concur, and also acknowledge that "all faculty in the university have important insights to contribute about how speaking and visual composing activities can enhance student learning" (Palmeri, 2012, p. 151). WAC directors therefore cannot assume faculty across the disciplines at our institutions—even those invested in the idea of doing multimodal projects—are prepared to create effective assessments or articulate these processes/goals to students.

We have found this to be true in our local context as faculty beyond those who initially developed courses and assignments around the concept of digital storytelling with support of the Mellon Foundation grant enter into the conversation about multimodal composing in response to an institution-wide exigence for implementing multimodal composing practices. This exigence comes via student learning outcomes adopted in spring 2016 focusing on rhetorical flexibility in both FYWS and upper-division writing-intensive courses in the majors. The FYWS outcome asks students to "[i]mplement, and subsequently reflect upon, writing strategies and conventions suited to a variety of purposes, audiences, and context-appropriate genres and media," while students in upper division writing-intensive courses are expected to "[p]roduce writing that reflects an awareness of context, purpose, audience, and genre conventions, particularly within the written genres (including genres that integrate writing with visuals, audio, or other multimodal components) of their major disciplines and/or career fields." With writing knowledge transfer embedded in writing program outcomes and deemed essential to the program's mission, we aim to position students as "writers [who] have the agency to both draw from and reshape writing knowledge to suit and influence writing context" (DePalma, 2015, p. 616). Therefore, faculty at our institution working with student writers at all levels across all disciplines necessarily need training on designing, implementing, and assessing multimodal projects so that students have a better chance of transferring their writing knowledge and (multimodal) composing practices from FYWS to writing-intensive courses in their majors and beyond.

We approach faculty development with an understanding that the same principles that apply to teaching for writing transfer in an undergraduate classroom apply to *all* learners, including our colleagues across disciplines as they engage, many for the first time, with complex concepts important to teaching multimodal projects from a writing studies perspective. Anne Beaufort (2007) argues that experts who do not pursue writing as an object of study in their disciplines and who, therefore, might have difficulty tapping into automatic, unconscious writing knowledge (Russell, 1995) stand to benefit from the knowledge domains heuristic as a means by which to give language

to their tacit knowledge about discipline-specific writing. In "Crossing Thresholds: What's to Know about Writing Across the Curriculum," Chris Anson (2015) confirms the importance of acknowledging this tacit disciplinary knowledge as part of WAC work, explaining that "faculty teaching in both discipline-based general education courses and courses in the major generally don't think of themselves as teachers of writing. They confess that they lack what they see as specialized knowledge to teach writing" (p. 204). Faculty equipped with language to discuss discipline-specific writing are then better prepared to teach their novice students who also require support for and understanding of the five overlapping knowledge domains (subject matter, discourse community, genre, rhetorical, and writing process knowledge) in order to develop into flexible writers positioned to transfer their writing knowledge in positive, productive ways as they move to new writing situations.

To address these exigencies, we created a workshop, first offered at Moravian in February 2018, designed to support faculty from across disciplines interested in developing or revising a multimodal project. In developing workshop materials and anticipating the varied points of entry from which participants—some of them new to writing instruction—would be approaching the idea of multimodality, we therefore built upon previous faculty development workshops on more traditional alphabetic modes of composing in which we had used Beaufort's conception of knowledge domains to help faculty plan assignments for first-year and writing-intensive classes. We reasoned that a modified application of the knowledge domains should also work as an inventive heuristic from which to explain essential considerations of multimodal projects, and might have the added benefit of steering the focus of this particular workshop away from the realm of how to use a particular app or program (which is addressed in other workshop contexts and through other campus resources available to faculty and students). Instead, we wanted the workshop to focus on expanding faculty notions/understanding of effective discipline-relevant writing to include academic, professional, and public writing projects that may privilege the aural, visual, gestural, and spatial modes oftentimes not included under the purview of what is understood to be "writing" and/or not given similar curricular weight or class time as more traditional alphabetic modes of composing.

Ultimately, we hoped that our presentation of these concepts would result in the development of multimodal projects that promote all of the factors that lead to meaningful writing experiences such as those described by Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Lerner (2016) in *The Meaningful Writing Project*:

- student agency;
- engagement with instructors, peers, and materials (particularly the content learned in the development of the project);
- learning that connects to previous experiences and passions and to future aspirations and identities. (p. 108)

As Eodice et al. (2016) explain, "[c]onstructing assignments that elicit more meaningful results will require some intentionality, and, likely, a closer look at what our assignments might actually be doing, a closer look at the boundaries" (p. 133). The knowledge domains encourage intentionality in the process of designing multimodal projects and give faculty a sense of where to place and how to articulate boundaries within some domains as well as where students might be given more agency to make choices about the projects they create. Because "[m]ultimodality asks students to think of composing in new ways . . . teachers may need to consider teaching in new ways" (Dieterle & Vie, 2015, p. 287) using strategies developed from the knowledge domain heuristic that model problem posing and problem solving, and that value curiosity and

experimentation while letting students guide the process and share as they build upon their own diverse knowledges.

With all of this in mind we developed a guide [see Appendix] for faculty to work through during and after the workshop. In order to illustrate the ways we adapted and applied the five knowledge domains to multimodal project design, we present them in the order we find it best for faculty to consider them, each starting with the defining features of the domain(s) according to Beaufort (2007), followed by an explanation regarding how we connect the domain(s) to multimodal composing practices, and ending with the series of questions we included for faculty to consider during the multimodal project design workshop.

Subject Matter and Discourse Community Knowledge

Defining features of the domains:

> Subject Matter: "Knowledge of specific topics, central concepts, and appropriate frames of analysis for documents. Also critical thinking skills to apply, manipulate, and draw from subject matter knowledge for rhetorical purposes."

> Discourse Community: "Knowledge of overarching goals for communication; underlying values; and metadiscourses of the discipline"

> —Anne Beaufort, *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*

An essential component to teaching for writing transfer is the use of "key terms students think with, write with, and reflect with reiteratively during the semester" (Yancey, Robertson, & Tackzak, 2014, p. 5) that, combined with a reflective framework, "help students develop a language for talking about composing, as well as a meta-awareness of their own processes as composers" (DePalma, 2015, p. 619). Because faculty from across the disciplines at our institution teach both FYWS and writing-intensive courses throughout increasingly writing-enriched majors, our writing program has a list of eight writing key terms with definitions shared in all workshops and training materials that are meant to provide consistency and clarity regarding concepts important to the teaching of writing across the curriculum: purpose, audience, genre, discourse community, rhetorical situation, writing process, multimodality, and reflection. In May 2017, Kathleen Blake Yancey gave a workshop on "Designing Writing for Learning, for Transfer" at our institution during which she had faculty engage in an assignment-building activity that included generating lists of course content key terms that could productively interact with the program's writing key terms.

For our February 2018 workshop, we decided to adapt this activity from Yancey by first asking faculty to consider their exigence. Specifically, we included a section at the beginning of the multimodal project design guide that asks, "If you have come to this workshop to revise or add to a pre-existing writing project to make it multimodal, what are the goals of the pre-existing project and why do you want to revise it? If you plan to design a multimodal writing project from scratch, what course/program learning outcome(s) would you like to address with the project you create and why?" We made the decision to ask this at the start of the workshop because the exigence for picking new genres to assign in replacement of or in addition to a more traditional researched alphabetic academic text should be informed but not dictated by relevant emerging genres and available technologies, programs, and/or apps. Synthesizing previously published scholarship on genre, Wardle (2009) notes that "genres are context specific and complex and cannot be easily or meaningfully mimicked outside their naturally occurring rhetorical situations" (p. 767). For this

reason we wanted to guide faculty to make decisions that would lead to multimodal projects designed with rhetorical intentionality, representing or purposefully extending the genre set and ways of thinking critically within the discourse community from which students would be writing. Our own experiences assigning audio projects intending to invoke public audiences beyond the discourse community of the classroom furthered our realization that the act of translating disciplinary discourse community-specific knowledge to wider public audiences is an undervalued and under-supported skill, and multimodal projects leading to the production of audio essays, for example, provide a way for students to both think about this translation and to expand knowledge production via the use of media and distribution methods outside of what is traditional and expected.

Randi A. Engle et al. (2012) explain the importance of how students perceive the relevance of the subject matter to which they are introduced, saying, "[a]t the most basic level, students who *expect* they will need to continue using what they have learned may *prepare* for such future use. They are likely to study that material more often and more intensively, which may result in more enduring memory representations that students can draw upon during later transfer tasks" (p. 221). Adding to this idea they posit a related hypothesis: "authorship may foster student accountability to particular content, which makes them more likely to use this content in their transfer contexts" (Engle et al., 2012, p. 221). For a multimodal project to be meaningful in a discipline-specific context, the rhetorical functions of the project should, therefore, be framed as similar to something a student can expect to do again in the future as a productive member of a particular discourse community. That being said, the subject matter to be learned has the potential to be transferred along with the writing knowledge and processes especially if the subject matter key terms chosen connect to specific course content learning goals and not only to skill in the use of a specific technological tool.

Rhetorical and Genre Knowledge

Defining features of the domains:

> Rhetorical: "Knowledge of the immediate rhetorical situation: needs of a specific audience and specific purpose(s) for a single text."

> Genre: "Knowledge of standard genres used in the discipline and features of those genres: rhetorical aims, appropriate content; structure and linguistic features"

> —Anne Beaufort, *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*

When summarizing the patterns that emerge in the research on transfer of writing practice and knowledge, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak (2014) note that "[s]tudents have a sense of genre and write inside the conventions of genre, but they don't develop a conceptual understanding of or a language for genre, nor can they describe taking what they have learned about genre in one context and using it in another" (p. 28). In "Genre Transfer in a Multimodal Composition Class," Cheryl Ball (2012) illustrates how such an inability to translate genre knowledge from one situation to another happens when students are assigned multimodal projects. Ball reflects on previous iterations of courses centered on multimodal composition and discusses how those classes did not help students create meaningful or innovative multimodal projects because they inadvertently encouraged students to transfer familiar genres to new media:

> What is more typical is for [undergraduate] students to uptake [...] a familiar genre like the five-paragraph essay, or for graduate students the academic/research essay, onto a

> new medium such as video. The majority of those students do not engage in the critical and reflective revision strategies needed to understand the purposes and usefulness of new media composition; that lack of engagement is reflected in their design justifications, which often turn out thin and unsupported by effective rhetorical and aesthetic choices. (pp. 27-28)

These findings prompted her to further revise the course, moving towards a genre studies approach which demonstrates that "the shifting nature of digital scholarship pushes students as authors to choose what modes, media, genres, and technologies they believe are needed to reach an audience of teacher-scholars invested in, but perhaps with much still to learn about, new media" (p. 33). DePalma (2015) uncovered similar patterns in a large-scale research study examining transfer of writing knowledge from print to digital formats, noting that "[n]early every student [...] spoke of the challenges they faced when attempting to coordinate semiotic resources in ways that fit their rhetorical objectives in their digital stories" (p. 632).

Research from the University of Arizona presented at the 2017 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference illustrates this finding about students to be true of new graduate teaching assistants as well. Jacobson et al. (2017) found that teachers new to writing instruction and/or those with little training on concepts of genre who began implementing genre-informed pedagogy in first-year writing quickly perceived benefits to student writing—as one study participant noted, "[g]enre is incredibly relevant to FYW students because it allows students to use writing outside of their English classes"—but remained less confident about their own abilities to fully grasp or teach genre. This, combined with what we know about the challenges students face in understanding genre, led us to build in opportunities at our workshop for faculty to carefully consider the genre they were asking students to work within so as to be able to guide students through that same process of analyzing and developing a working knowledge of that genre's conventions and affordances in addition to other elements of the rhetorical situation.

We decided to model this process by explaining our exigence for using audio projects in our FYWS classes, starting from the point of recognizing that audio pieces, specifically podcasts, are a common and effective way for someone to communicate subject matter knowledge to audiences outside of their immediate disciplinary discourse community. For almost any given topic, there is very likely a podcast available to listen to as an example that illustrates the expansion of the boundaries of a given discourse community and an example of the application of a new genre—thereby also providing an accessible entry point into genre analysis for students and faculty who are familiar with a podcast's subject matter. Even in the case of an assigned audio project modeled after an episode of a specific podcast subgenre—like those we use in our FYWS classes—students still have agency over many aspects of the rhetorical situation as they are asked to make design choices to convey a tone appropriate for what they have identified as the intended audience and purpose.

Writing Process Knowledge

Defining features of the domain:

> "Knowledge of how to get discipline-specific writing tasks accomplished (meta-knowledge of cognitive processes in composing and phases of writing projects)"
>
> —Anne Beaufort, *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*

The writing process knowledge students use from invention to delivery in primarily alphabetic writing situations is still imperative to multimodal composing, and the nature of multimodal projects oftentimes places greater emphasis on each step of the writing process, especially in courses where the faculty member is learning a new technology/medium/digital genre and its affordances alongside their students. Shane Wood (2019), in "Multimodal Pedagogy and Multimodal Assessment: Toward a Reconceptualization of Traditional Frameworks" likewise contends that "[m]ultimodal pedagogy continually emphasizes process by asking students to become aware of the rhetorical choices they make through the creation of multimodal projects" (p. 246).

We recommend that students begin the process of creating a multimodal project with an awareness of the conventions and functions of the genre they are trying to create—ideally learned through their own study and analysis of artifacts within that same genre, using the same or similar questions as those we posed to faculty for the purpose of understanding genre and rhetorical situation (see Appendix). Additionally, depending on the scope and chosen genre of a given multimodal project, students will need to:

- develop their ability to use a set of technological tools (because faculty members should not assume all of their digital native students have a high level of proficiency with multimodal production or the applications that support such practices), which can be facilitated by faculty or student experts, other technology support people, online tutorials/user guides, or some combination thereof;

- collect assets for which students may need to understand creative commons copyright and fair use laws and that may or may not require HSIRB approval and/or informed consent to attain (depending on the purpose of the project and whether human subjects will be interviewed under the purview of qualitative research, journalism, artistic expression, etc.);

- work intentionally to make the final product accessible to all audience members through language choices, design choices, screen-readable text, the use of ALT tags, transcriptions of audio, video captioning, and other usability features as needed; and

- plan for the long-term sustainability of the project if it is delivered digitally.

Because of these added considerations, faculty planning to introduce a multimodal project should be prepared to allow for more time devoted to introducing or working through elements of the project with which students may not have prior experience such as those items listed above. Since multimodal work can be intellectually demanding (considering students' possibly novice understanding of concepts related to rhetorical and genre knowledge), project timelines from initial introduction of an assignment to its due date should also be extended. For this reason, we recommend faculty assign and utilize a text like *Writer/Designer* (Ball et al., 2018) that can complement classroom instruction by providing students with scaffolding and support for the process of creating a multimodal project.

Students may not be asked to recreate a particular genre or repeat the exact composing process for a specific multimodal project during their time in college; however, the "meta-knowledge of cognitive processes" (Beaufort, 2007, p. 221) developed by making rhetorical, design, accessibility and usability, and other necessary choices connected to ethical, effective communication practices upon which one should reflect when creating multimodal projects will likely be utilized throughout their future experiences as critically literate citizens, and, therefore, are still relevant to learning. To facilitate this, more opportunities for students to reflect in order to explain choices and for faculty to give formative feedback on those choices should be provided throughout the process.

Multimodal Project Design Faculty Workshop

> "As leaders and participants in writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) initiatives, we should actively resist the common tendency to present alphabetic writing as inherently the best tool for promoting active learning in disciplinary courses."
>
> — Jason Palmeri, *Remixing Composition*

The initial February 2018 workshop, which we recorded with HSIRB-approval and participants' informed consent, was attended by eight faculty representing the following academic departments and campus offices: speech-language pathology, education, English, sociology, philosophy, religion, biology, chemistry, and nursing departments as well as the office of accessibility support. These participants, like most faculty across our campus, had varied levels of experience and proficiency with multimodal writing and, consequently, different goals for themselves and their students—from an interest in learning the basics of multimodality to multimodal projects still in the early stages of design to revisions of existing multimodal projects to a desire to implement multimodality across programs and curricula currently under development. Our primary objective was to emphasize to all attendees how multimodal projects can be positioned to lead to meaningful writing experiences that support course learning goals and facilitate transfer of writing skills.

As was necessary in the limited time we had for this particular workshop, we introduced participants to the conceptual model of the five overlapping knowledge domains and presented on a slide the following condensed explanation of writing transfer theory in order to speak with attendees about the importance and significance of reflection, key terms, and genre conventions and functions:

> The transfer of writing abilities is a strategic and dynamic process that is best fostered through the combined efforts of every faculty member involved in a student's collegiate experience. Specifically the shared use of writing key terms, the concept of genre discussed "not just as conventions but as responses to specific discourse community values and purposes" (Beaufort, 2016, p. 29), and strategic reliance upon reflective practice can be used as tools of transfer to both introduce new writing scenarios and also connect the work done previously to each new project, assignment, or writing task.

To demonstrate how these concepts work in practice across a range of genres and media, we provided examples of digital, multimodal student projects completed during the period of our Mellon Foundation funding: an app-based ebook utilizing still images, video, and text to apply political science theory to a local historic site; a website detailing a student's art class projects and experiences throughout the semester; a collaboratively narrated video presenting historiographical perspectives on a famous medieval woman; a Soundcloud collection of soundwriting projects recorded by students in Crystal's FYWS class; and an interactive Google Map collaboratively created by students in Crystal's Creative Nonfiction class tagged with locations of personal significance to students and accompanied by short narratives about each location. In sharing these examples we hoped to emphasize the exigence for encouraging multimodal projects like the infographic or a series of podcast episodes rather than simply encouraging students to write in different genres because, as Palmeri (2012) argues in a quote we shared with faculty during the workshop, multimodality has the potential to expand students' communicative repertoire and allows teachers "to value and support all the diverse auditory, visual, and alphabetic ways of knowing that students bring to our classes" (p. 158).

Following this, we provided a detailed walkthrough of Meg's FYWS audio project in order to illustrate how the many scaffolded components of this project map onto each of the five knowledge domains. We should note here that although we focused on audio composing as our particular point of entry into multimodal composing practices and provided a detailed model of one audio composing assignment, we did not advocate that any one specific type of multimodal project should be assigned in a particular course or discipline. Rather, we provided background information about transfer and ideas for potential projects and then utilized the multimodal project design guide to lead participants through a reflective practice meant to inform the development of a multimodal project relevant to the discourse community and subject matter knowledge domains within or related to their own disciplines.

As faculty worked through the guide we shared with them and began generating and refining ideas for their own courses, they engaged in discussion with each other and with us about the opportunities they saw as well as questions they had about how multimodal projects can be positioned in classroom, disciplinary, and institutional contexts.

Conclusion

> "[W]hile the localized pedagogical practices of individual teachers can be effective in creating space for multimodality, it is also imperative to contend with the larger institutional and cultural environments within which these practices are, to some degree, circumscribed and to find tactics to work within such environments productively."
>
> — Rick Wysocki et al., "On Multimodality: A Manifesto"

The discussions that ensued as participants at the multimodal project design workshop began grappling with the material we presented provided us in our roles as writing program administrators with an opportunity to better understand where our colleagues from outside of writing studies needed and wanted more convincing about the place of multimodal composing in the curriculum, sometimes questioning multimodal composing as a legitimate scholarly use of class time or asking for more explanation and clarification on particular concepts. We listened and from that listening have come to realize that some of the knowledge domains are more relatable to faculty across the disciplines than others.

For example, faculty at the workshop easily accepted that subject matter knowledge should be tied to student learning outcomes, and a manageable list of key terms with definitions can be developed to emphasize the most important concepts related to the course content a student needs to understand in order to engage most effectively in a discipline-specific writing project. Faculty also tended to value the utility of writing process knowledge even if, at first, they may not have enough previous experience teaching writing to recognize how or how much to scaffold the many elements of the writing process for a specific multimodal writing project at introductory, intermediate, and capstone undergraduate levels. Other domains—such as discourse community, genre, and aspects of rhetorical situation—generated questions and discussion as colleagues worked toward more sophisticated understandings of these ideas; this is due, we think, to entrenchment (Anson, 2015) and to how firmly situated those knowledge domains are perceived to be within the disciplinary context of writing studies. The domain of discourse community knowledge was accessible when faculty members were asked to describe the goals and common mechanisms of communication for their discipline or classroom, but the concept grew in complexity when audiences representing discourse communities outside of the confines of the disciplines in which faculty are entrenched were considered. One participant requested that we "talk a little bit about how the audience and the discourse communities differ." That same participant later noted while questioning whether

instructors can reasonably assess work created for audiences to which they do not belong: "Behind all this is the fact that they're getting a grade, right? [... T]hey're writing for me because I'm grading them."

Likewise, genre knowledge concepts that go beyond the formal conventions of the most commonly assigned discipline-relevant genres and into the realm of rhetorical genre studies are more difficult to cover in a workshop or even in a series of workshops. Discussions about genre at the workshop covered some of the following: What are the parameters of a genre? Is a podcast an umbrella category for many genres of serialized audio products or is it a genre in and of itself? When giving students examples of the same multimodal genre to analyze for their conventions and social functions, should the examples all be about the same topic or serve similar social functions or use rhetorical strategies in similar ways? Under what conditions should students be allowed to deviate from genre conventions, and what happens if that deviation from convention falls flat?

A promising recent study analyzing student-produced alphabetic texts, multimodal remixes of those alphabetic texts, and self-reflections of choices made throughout the writing processes illustrates that multimodal composing can be transfer-oriented, helping students become "better prepared to address complex rhetorical situations when they make use of multiple modes and their affordances" (Ferruci & DeRosa, 2019, p. 201). However, our work here has shown us that, similar to students' initial undertaking of multimodal projects, faculty across the disciplines interested in developing these projects need more time to work through and reflect on the knowledge domains in order to create rhetorically contextualized projects than they would in developing new projects based in more commonly assigned discipline-relevant alphabetic modes of composing.

Since we initially ran the multimodal project design workshop, we have offered additional faculty development opportunities on multimodality that provided participants with more support and time to explore the theory and scholarship that ground our claims about effective project design and exigencies for multimodal composition, and make connections to their own disciplines. Specifically, we sponsored faculty reading groups of *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) with the intention of helping faculty gain deeper knowledge of and even complicate the theories that underpin the knowledge domains and consider how threshold concepts in their discipline articulate with writing studies threshold concepts. In subsequent workshops, we have built in opportunities for faculty to do the following:

- analyze a robust collection of multimodal project assignments and student work created in response to those assignments;
- explore and experiment with technology as a means to develop a deeper understanding of tools relevant to multimodal composing in various genres;
- develop a multimodal project and tools for assessment with the support of a scaffolded process for doing so; and
- engage in open-ended discussion and receive peer feedback on multimodal projects developed for their own classes.

Throughout the process of expanding and refining support for multimodal project design and implementation, we have been able to communicate to faculty across the disciplines at Moravian College that "the theory supporting this work really [*is*] sound" (Shipka, 2006, p. 356), leading to novel opportunities for students to develop rhetorical situation and genre awareness beyond what might be necessary for completing projects comprised of more typical types of writing in the disciplines. Our first-year writing program in particular demonstrates the ways faculty from across disciplines have taken up the charge to incorporate multimodal projects into their teaching. Among

the Fall 2019 FYWS course offerings were "Yoga and Writing," "Writing with Light," and "Sound Strategies for Writing," all of which explicitly foreground non-alphabetic modalities. Projects in recent FYWS courses have included scientific posters on water use; audio public service announcements and infographics communicating public health messages; children's books exploring myriad course-related topics; digital exhibits of research artifacts on literature and social justice; interactive digital stories about environmental sustainability developed with mobile apps; and multimodal, multigenre, full-class collaborative presentations on mental health awareness. We hypothesize that students who engage with intentionally designed multimodal projects across the curriculum will be better prepared with the writing and metacognitive skills necessary to successfully approach future writing situations, and hope that faculty who develop and teach such projects in FYWS are more inclined to incorporate multimodal projects into other general education and upper-division major courses.

Although we theorized within and created a workshop for a very specific local context in the midst of a multimodal composing kairotic moment, we envision this model as a portable one that should be adapted to WAC faculty development or teacher training at other institutions—a model that can be further developed, particularly in regard to the promotion of inclusionary practices. Within the context of our writing program we plan to sustain our efforts to cultivate faculty buy-in from our colleagues across disciplines who approach multimodal composing with varied levels of prior knowledge—but who, once engaged, approach it with an innovative spirit—in order to continue working toward our writing transfer-centric goals for students, of which we consider multimodality to be an essential part.

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Appendix

Multimodal Project Design Guide

Step 1: Explain your exigence (i.e., the issue, problem, or situation that motivates you to write/act). If you have come to this workshop to revise or add to a pre-existing writing project, what are the goals of the pre-existing project and why do you want to revise it? If you plan to design a writing project from scratch, what course/program learning outcome(s) would you like to address with the project you create and why?

Step 2: Map your project onto the knowledge domains from which successful writers draw (Beaufort, 2007). We suggest you start with the subject matter knowledge prompt, then go to discourse community knowledge, then rhetorical or genre. End with writing process prompts.

Using 6-8 key terms, define the subject matter knowledge you want your students to develop through meaningful engagement with this project.

Define the discourse community from which your students will be writing. According to Swales (1990), a discourse community is a group with an agreed-upon set of common goals, recognized mechanisms of communication among members, members who use those mechanisms to engage in the community, recognized genre(s) used to further goals, recognized lexicon used among members, and a membership large enough and knowledgeable enough in the discourse to engage with it and share it with new members (pp. 24-27).

Name the community and describe its membership parameters:

What are the shared values and goals of the community? Why does this group exist? What does it do? (adapted from Wardle & Downs, 2016)

What genres help the community work towards its goals especially effectively? (adapted from Wardle & Downs, 2016)

What genres would expand the boundaries of the discourse community to help it reach new goals and potentially other discourse communities?

Define the genre knowledge students will need to successfully address the project. Note: The questions below can be used for an activity in your course.

1. In what genre do you want students to create their project? Why?

2. Using models of texts that function similarly to what you want your students to accomplish, describe the disciplinary/social context of the genre (adapted from Bawarshi
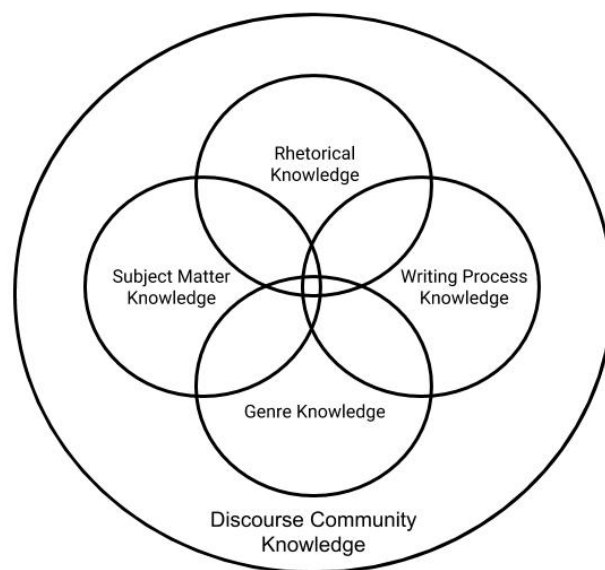
& Reiff, 2010):

- o   Where is the genre typically set?

- o   What is the typical subject of the genre?

- o   Who typically uses the genre?

- o   When and why is the genre used? What purposes does the genre serve for the people who use it?

- o   What, if any, examples of this genre exist within your disciplinary/content-area context?

3.   Describe the patterns that emerge in the genre (adapted from Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010):

- o   What type of content is usually included or excluded?

- o   What appeals are used most often? Do you notice any patterns in appeals to emotions (pathos), to logic (logos), to the credibility of the texts' creators (ethos)?

- o   How are the texts organized? What common parts do the samples share?

- o   What design elements (aural, visual, textual, spatial, gestural) are used most often?

Define the rhetorical situation of the project. For what audience and purpose, in what genre, presented in what medium, in response to what exigence do you want students to create their project?

Which, if any, of those elements (audience, purpose, genre, medium, and/or exigence) would you like for students to define for themselves as part of the idea generation stage of the project? Why?

Define the optimal writing process for the project. Given the course level and prior experience that your students will likely have with the other four knowledge domains in relation to the project:

- What steps will students need to take in order to successfully complete the project? To what degree will you provide structured guidelines, planning documents, and deadlines for proposals, research/information gathering, drafts, and revisions?

- How and to what degree will you need to support students in developing necessary functional literacies (facility with hardware and software)? How can opportunities to practice functional literacy be integrated throughout the writing process?

- What information do students need to responsibly cite sources and/or abide by fair use and copyright law?

- Is this project one that requires HSIRB approval? If so, will you secure that approval on behalf of the class, or will students engage in the application process themselves?

- What steps must be taken, and what information will students need, to ensure the project is fully accessible (i.e., transcripts, video captioning, image ALT tags, layout and design, etc.)?

- Where do opportunities exist for peer feedback? For instructor feedback?

- Where do opportunities exist throughout the project for students to reflect on choices made within or among the five knowledge domains?

Step 3: Decide how you will articulate the outcomes of the project to students using P.A.G.E., and assess the project based on those goals.

Purpose (of the assignment):

Audience (real or imagined, intended to engage with the completed writing project):

Genre Conventions and Function(s):

Expectations (i.e., anything else students need to do to be successful on the assignment):

Step 4: To facilitate transfer, remember to ask your students to reflect while completing their writing projects. Students can be asked to:

- reflect on the successes and failures of their work on the writing project and think about what they would do differently next time;

- reflect on the rhetorical effectiveness of their writing project and consider how they will use their rhetorical knowledge in future writing experiences;

- reflect on their adherence to and/or purposeful deviation from genre conventions and consider what they will do to understand new genres within the context of the work those genres do within specific discourse communities;

- reflect on what they learned about how to communicate effectively for the particular discourse community outlined in the assignment and how they will apply that knowledge in future situations;

- reflect on what prior writing, subject matter, rhetorical, genre, and/or discourse community knowledge they drew from to complete the project; what they learned in any/all of those areas from completing the project; and how they plan to apply those knowledges in the future based on what they learned from completing the project;

- Other ideas?

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Notes

[1] For examples of scholarship theorizing intentional articulations between first-year writing and larger WAC efforts see Benson, et. al (2013), "Rethinking First Year English as First Year Writing Across the Curriculum," Menefee-Libey (2015), "The First-Year Writing Course as a WAC Cultural Bridge for Faculty," and Fodrey, et al. (2019), "Activity Theory as Tool for WAC Program Development: Organizing First-Year Writing and Writing-Enriched Curriculum Systems."

[2] See Fodrey and Hassay's "Piloting WEC as a Context-Responsive Writing Research Initiative," forthcoming in *The Writing-Enriched Curriculum: Accounts of Departmentally-Focused Implementation,* edited by Chris Anson and Pamela Flash, in the WAC Clearinghouse *Perspective on Writing* series.

[3] See Yozell, Fodrey, & Mikovits (2018) "Implementing Digital Storytelling across the Curriculum at a Small Liberal Arts College" for details.

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