CHAPTER 8.

OPENING UP: WRITING STUDIES' TURN TO OPEN-ACCESS BOOK PUBLISHING

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For more than two decades, scholars in writing studies have explored and, with increasing frequency, embraced open-access publishing as a primary means of sharing scholarly work. While these efforts have most often been associated with scholarly journals, publishing initiatives focused on monographs, edited collections, and textbooks have grown to the point where their collective output rivals and in some cases exceeds that of traditional academic presses. In this chapter, I explore the development of open-access book publishing in our field, placing it in the context of early work with online open-access journals and, drawing on activity theory, consider the distributed, collaborative work typically involved in these open-access book initiatives, focusing in particular on how this work contributes to the quality and credibility of published books and the likely operational and financial sustainability of each initiative. [1]

THE RISE OF OPEN-ACCESS PUBLISHING IN WRITING STUDIES

Scholars in the field of writing studies have played a central role in exploring the use of technology to support writing and the teaching of writing. The field has contributed in important ways to the development of modern word processing programs; the design of communication tools such as chat, revision tracking, and commenting; the development and exploration of the potential uses of hypertext; and the early development and application of advanced writing environments. [2] These contributions have profoundly shaped

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1   Activity theory is discussed in detail later in this chapter. Key work includes Cole (1996), Engeström (1987, 1993, 1999a, 1999b, 2014), Leontiev (1978, 2005), Rubinštejn (1987), and Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1989).

2   For representative work associated with word processing, see Bridwell et al. (1984), Collier (1983), Hawisher (1986, 1988), Kiefer & Smith (1983, 1984), LeBlanc (1988), and Sullivan

how writers compose, writing teachers work with students, and writing students learn to write.

With this attention to technology, it seems reasonable and perhaps even inevitable that our field has also included early adopters and innovators in the area of digital publishing. The work of these scholars—many of whom were graduate students or early career faculty members when they established the first open-access digital journals in the field—laid a strong foundation for making scholarly work available on the web. In 1996, writing in the first issue of *Kairos*, a journal that, with *RhetNet* and *enculturation*, set the direction for a still-growing collection of open-access journals in our field, [3] Fred Kemp considered the opportunities and challenges posed to scholars by the dissemination of scholarly work:

> Like medieval monks in the fifteenth century, many of us are facing displacement. A new breed of knowledge-makers is on the horizon, bringing a new breed of knowledge. The ACW [Association for Computers and Writing] and Kairos are searching out the all-important seam between the old and the new, that place where we can cross the divide without falling into a gap of self-absorbed, self-imposed, and futile isolation.

Kemp noted in his letter to the founders of *Kairos* that he foresaw a time when the internet would be "not be just an interesting gimmick, or even a flashy but shallow alternative to print sources, but the principal home to a 'knowledge domain,' that amorphous 'center' to the essential facts, opinions, and sheer ethos that holds an academic discipline together." He saw this happening relatively quickly, "Not because electronic text in and of itself reads better on a computer monitor. . . . Nor because the writing that appears in the electronic world is superior to that which appears in the print world. No one who loves the written

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(1989). For work associated with the design of communication tools such as chat, revision tracking, and commenting, see Batson (1993, 1998), Day (1996), Kaplan et al. (1987), Neuwirth et al. (1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1993), Taylor (1993), Webb (1997), and Wojahn et al. (1998). For work associated with the development and exploration of the potential uses of hypertext, see Bolter (1991, 1993), Kaplan (1995), Moulthrop (1991, 1994), and Slatin 1990). For work associated with the early development and application of advanced writing environments, see Butler et al. (1988), Kozma (1991), Lansman et al. (1993), Neuwirth (1984), Smith (1987), Smith & Lansman (1989), Tuman (1993), and Wresch (1982, 1984).

3   *RhetNet* was established by Eric Crump in 1995. Its archive is available through the WAC Clearinghouse. *Kairos* (kairos.technorhetoric.net) published its first issue in spring 1996. Founding and early editorial staff members include Jennifer Bowie, Nick Carbone, Amelia DeLoach, Mick Dougherty, Doug Eyman, James Inman, Claudine Keenan, Elizabeth Pass, Michael Salvo, Greg Siering, Jason Teague, Jeff White, and Corey W. Wick. *Enculturation* (enculturation.net) was established in 1996 by Byron Hawk and David Rieder. Its first issue appeared in spring 1997. *Kairos* and *Enculturation* are both active journals.

word would make that claim . . . yet." Instead, he argued, the key advantage digital texts would have over printed texts "indisputably, is access."

Kemp's notion of access had more to do with increasing the number of voices that would be made available through the web than with open access to scholarly work—an observation that forecast the impacts of social media but which was grounded primarily in work with network-based communication and hypertext. Yet his focus on access continues to be relevant in both senses of the word. Within writing studies, certainly, open-access publishing has reshaped our scholarly work in fundamental ways, leading to a heavy reliance on open-access journals to support scholarly discourse within the field and, in what I will discuss in the following sections of this chapter, the early stages of a turn toward open-access book publishing.

Open-access publishing has become the norm for new journals in our field. Over the more than 25 years since Kemp made his observations, open-access journals have appeared with regularity. Some have been short-lived, while others seem likely to endure far beyond the tenure of their founders. Although established organizations have contributed to the growth of new journals, we have seen far more launched by scholars who have felt a need to fill a gap in our scholarly efforts. At the beginning of 2023, more than 115 writing studies journals were listed by the WAC Clearinghouse.[4] Of those, more than 80 are available in open-access formats. Most that are not available in open-access formats are published either by companies such as Elsevier or Sage or by professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and the International Writing Centers Association—and this latter group of journals in some cases makes articles available in open-access formats after an embargo period. With some exceptions, the journals that do not release their work in open-access formats provide access to them in digital formats through library database subscriptions, typically through JSTOR or Project Muse. Notably, of 28 journals on the list that were established in the past decade, 27 have chosen to release their work in open-access formats.

PLACING OPEN-ACCESS PUBLISHING IN CONTEXT

Open-access publishing can be seen as a gift to readers of scholarly work—and arguably to the authors of that work, since they benefit from increased visibility for the information, ideas, and arguments they share. Open-access publishing

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4   The WAC Clearinghouse is a scholar-run publishing initiative established in 1997 that provides access to more than 185 scholarly books, more than a dozen journals, the CompPile database, and numerous resources for instructors who use writing in their courses (see wac. colostate.edu).

has extended the reach of journals and books beyond national borders. It has also contributed to increased availability of scholarly work over time—particularly work published in book form, since the digital nature of open-access publications and the low-cost of storage has allowed work to be available even decades after it was first published.

That said, open-access publishing can also be seen as a challenge to traditional academic reward structures, professional organizations, and academic publishers. As growing numbers of scholars in the field of writing studies have published in open-access venues, some of which lack the imprimatur of academic institutions or professional organizations, those engaged in merit, tenure, and promotion reviews have found themselves faced with the need to assess not only the quality of the journals and presses that publish this work but also the appropriateness of venues that do not align neatly with the long-recognized definitions of articles, book chapters, and books (see, for example, the discussion of *Intermezzo* later in this chapter).

Similarly, those engaged in leadership roles in our professional organizations have long recognized challenges associated with the rise of open-access journals and books. Simply put, the perceived value of membership in these organizations—and thus the annual dues they can charge—is tied at least to some extent to the value of access to an organization's subscription-based journals and discounted books. A similar challenge is posed to traditional academic presses, which rely on sales of books to ensure their continued operation. This is true even for presses that enjoy support from a professional organization, an academic institution, or a consortium of institutions. Open-access book publishing places pressure on both pricing structures and the ability to attract leading authors.

Equally important, open-access publishing represents a challenge to the scholars who work with open-access journals and book series. These challenges can be viewed as falling into two broad categories:

- *Quality and Credibility*. Scholars engaged in open-access publishing must consider how best to implement a high-quality peer-review process and devise appropriate and consistent oversight of that process. They must also determine how a journal or book series can be seen as a worthy home for work that advances current scholarly conversations.
- *Sustainability*. To ensure that an open-access journal or book series can endure, its leaders must consider how best to organize their efforts and whether funding is required for continued operation. In addition, they must consider how the work they publish can be situated within existing professional and institutional reward structures—or they must explore how to change those structures.

TURNING TOWARD OPEN-ACCESS
BOOKS IN WRITING STUDIES

While open-access journals have become the norm in the field of writing studies, open-access book series publish only a fraction of books in our field. Even so, open-access book publishing has a relatively long history in writing studies, with the first peer-reviewed, open-access digital books published by *RhetNet* in 1996. Beth Baldwin's monograph, *Conversations: Computer-Mediated Dialogue, Multilogue, and Learning*, was released in July of that year, and a collection she edited with Tim Flood, *The Rhetorical Dimensions of Cyberspace*, was released a few months later. The next books would not appear until the early 2000s, and those would once again be released by a journal, in this case *Academic.Writing*, which was born out of efforts to establish the WAC Clearinghouse.

I've written elsewhere about the founding of the WAC Clearinghouse (Palmquist, 2022; Palmquist et al., 2012). Briefly, following a period of initial enthusiasm, it became clear that contributing to the development of a website was not widely recognized as worthy of consideration during annual merit evaluations or tenure and promotion reviews. To better address the rewards structures then in place at most higher-education institutions, those of us involved with founding the Clearinghouse decided to reshape it into an academic journal.[5] We believed that doing so would allow contributors to the project to receive credit for their work—in this case, as writers, reviewers, and editors—and that we could still distribute the resources that we had initially envisioned as the heart of the Clearinghouse. In mid-1998, we decided to create *Academic.Writing*, a scholarly journal that can be viewed at wac.colostate.edu/aw/. We released its first volume on March 6, 2000.

Within a few months, we were approached by scholars who wished to include their out-of-print books on the *Academic.Writing* website. Following RhetNet's example, we did so, releasing three books before the second volume of *Academic.Writing* was published: Susan McLeod and Margot Soven's edited collection *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*, Charles Bazerman's monograph *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*, and Toby Fulwiler and Art Young's edited collection *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the*

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5   I initially approached William Condon and Christine Hult about the idea of developing a website that would provide access to scholarly work on WAC at the 1997 CCCC conference. By the end of 1997, we had been joined by Luann Barnes, Linn Bekins, Nick Carbone, Gail Hawisher, Will Hochman, Kate Kiefer, Donna LeCourt, Paul Prior, Martin Rosenberg, Cindy Selfe, and Richard Selfe, and a collection of resources had been published on the web.

Curriculum. During the same period, *Academic.Writing* also became home to the digital archives of three other journals: *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, *The WAC Journal*, and *RhetNet.*

Perhaps most important, a lengthy conversation with Bazerman a month after the publication of the first volume of *Academic.Writing* would eventually lead to a new vision for the Clearinghouse. Following our presentations at a WAC symposium at Baruch College, we embarked on a walking tour of Manhattan. At some point, our discussion turned to the publishing crisis that was then facing the field (see James McPherson's 2003 discussion of the crisis for a useful historical overview). Bazerman noted that books in a series he was then editing had been purchased by an average of 25 libraries nationwide, a significant drop from the hundreds of libraries that publishers had once counted on to purchase scholarly books. He told me that, for financial reasons, the publisher was considering dropping the series. As our walking tour progressed, we agreed to explore the idea of having the Clearinghouse publish the series in open-access formats. It would become the Reference Guides to Rhetoric and Composition series, which Bazerman continues to edit with Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi and which the Clearinghouse co-publishes with Parlor Press (parlorpress.com).

Our discussion also led to two other agreements, one that would lead to a long-standing relationship with Bazerman and a second that would help set the direction for open-access book publishing in writing studies. First, we agreed to republish *Shaping Written Knowledge* on the Clearinghouse. This would be the first of seven original and five republished books that Bazerman would release through the Clearinghouse, and which collectively helped establish the Clearinghouse as a publisher of high-quality scholarly work. Second, we agreed to publish what would become the first original scholarly book released by the Clearinghouse, Bazerman and David Russell's edited collection, *Writing Selves/Writing Societies: Research from Activity Perspectives.*[6] Published in 2003, the book launched the Perspectives on Writing series, which to date has released more than 40 edited collections and monographs. It also served, to the best of my knowledge, as the first original open-access book published in writing studies since *RhetNet* had published Beth Baldwin and Tim Flood's books in 1996.

Within a decade, the Clearinghouse had published 25 original monographs and edited collections and had re-published 16 books on WAC and writing

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6   A more detailed description of the discussion that led to publication of *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* can be found in Bazerman et al. (2008).

studies that had gone out of print.[7] During that time, several other open-access book series emerged, including the Computers and Composition Digital Press,[8] Writing Spaces,[9] and the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative.[10] Two other initiatives, Intermezzo[11] and WLN Digital Edited Collections,[12] were subsequently established.

The leaders of these initiatives, like the leaders of the Clearinghouse, have wrestled with and, through a variety of strategies, succeeded in addressing issues related to quality, credibility, and sustainability. Notably, each initiative has established partnerships with established academic presses and, in some cases, with professional organizations. This includes the Clearinghouse, which counts among its partners the University Press of Colorado, Parlor Press, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum. The strategies used by the leaders of these open-access book projects, including decisions about whether and how to establish partnerships with other academic publishers and professional organizations, can be understood through the lens of activity theory.

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7   In the past eight years, that pace has accelerated. More than 100 original books are now available along with nearly 80 re-published books. See wac.colostate.edu/books/.

8   The Computers and Composition Digital Press (ccdigitalpress.org) was founded in 2007 by Gail Hawisher and Cindy Selfe. It became an imprint of Utah State University Press in 2008, and published its first book, *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability*, a collection edited by Dànielle DeVoss, Heidi McKee, and Dickie Selfe, in 2009. Since its founding, CCDP has published more than 20 books, all of which are born digital.

9   Writing Spaces (writingspaces.org), which publishes open-access collections of peer-reviewed essays that are written by teachers for students, was founded by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky in 2009. To date, the complete volumes and individual essays have been downloaded more than 2.5 million times.

10   The Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative (digitalrhetoriccollaborative.org) was established in 2012, following the 2011 Computers and Writing Conference, as a collaboration between the Gayle Morris Sweetland Center for Writing and the University of Michigan Press. It published its first book in 2015 and has since published eight others. All of its books have a digital component, typically a website with embedded media. In addition to print editions, each book can be viewed through the Fulcrum publishing platform (fulcrum.org).

11   Intermezzo (intermezzo.enculturation.net), a digital book project associated with the journal enculturation, publishes works that are considered to be too long for a traditional journal article and too brief to work as a monograph. Led by editor and co-founder Jeff Rice and associate editors Casey Boyle and Jim Brown, Intermezzo published its first work in 2015, Bruce Horner, Cynthia Selfe, and Tim Lockridge's *Translinguality, Transmodality, and Difference: Exploring Dispositions and Change in Language and Learning*. It has since published 12 more longform works.

12   WLN Digital Edited Collections (wlnjournal.org/#resources) is supported by WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship. Its first book, *How We Teach Writing Tutors*, edited by Karen Gabrielle Johnson, Ted Roggenbuck, and Crystal Conzo, was published in January 2019. Two more edited collections have appeared since.

DEVELOPING THE PUBLISHING COLLABORATIVE MODEL: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

The impending publication of *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* encouraged the leaders of the WAC Clearinghouse to rethink its mission and organizational structure. In late 2002, the WAC Clearinghouse was relaunched as a publisher of journals and books, with *Academic.Writing* as one of its journals. Over the next several years, we would refine an approach to open-access publishing that I've referred to as the publishing collaborative (Palmquist, 2003; Palmquist, 2022). In a recent chapter in Greg Gibberson, Megan Schoen, & Christian Weisser's edited collection *Editors in Writing,* I sketched the origins of my thinking about this approach:

> Drawing on activity theory, which I had been exposed to as
> a result of its central role in Bazerman and Russell's edited
> collection *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* (2003), I began
> thinking of the Clearinghouse as a useful example of the kinds
> of distributed, collaborative work that activity theory had
> been developed, in part, to interrogate and explain. (2022;
> pp. 118-138)

In their introduction to *Writing Selves/Writing Societies*, Bazerman and Russell (2003b) described the role activity theory might play in writing studies. Describing activity theory as "a set of related approaches that view human phenomena as dynamic, in action," they observed that it provides a productive means of understanding the production and use of texts:

> Human-produced artifacts, such as utterances or texts, or
> shovels or symphonies, are not to be understood as objects in
> themselves, but within the activities that give rise and use to
> them. Their meanings are found in these dynamics of human
> interaction… Texts—alphanumeric marks on surfaces—are
> one material tool or technology among many. But texts
> powerfully and pervasively mediate and re-mediate human
> activities. (Bazerman & Russell, 2003b, p. 1)

Activity theory—also referred to as cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and sociocultural activity theory—provides a theoretical framework that can help us understand cooperative work.[13] It emerged from work carried out by Soviet

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13 For more about activity theory, see Cole (1996), Engeström (1987, 1990, 1993, 1999a, 1999b, 2014), Engeström and Miettinen (1999), Kaptelinin (2005), Leontiev (1978, 2005), Rubinštejn (1987), and Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1989). For more about its application to writing

psychologists in the 1920s and 1930s to develop psychological theories that better addressed the work of groups, and in particular theories that could provide alternatives to Western theories that focused on the individual. Key voices in this effort included Alexei Leontiev, Sergei Rubinstein, and Lev Vygotsky. Jeanne Pau Yen Ho and her colleagues (2016) characterize activity theory as moving through three phases.[14] The initial phase is characterized by Vygotsky's three-part model of subject, object, and mediating artifact (see Figure 8.1).

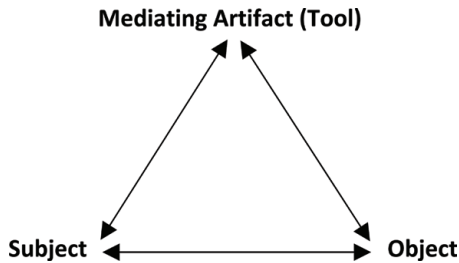**Mediating Artifact (Tool)**

Subject **Object**

Figure 8.1. A model of the first phase of activity theory

Following the translation of their work, activity theory became a powerful framework for understanding the work of groups. Yrjö Engeström would play a central role in that emergence, drawing on Leontiev's work to expand Vygotsky's triadic activity model of subject, object, and mediator into a more complex model that is distinguished by its stronger focus on cultural and historical factors that shape the work of an activity system. His model, and more importantly his extensive efforts to explore the use of activity theory to understand complex, socially mediated actions and decision-making, marked a second phase in the development of activity theory (see Figure 8.2).

The most recent elaboration of activity theory focuses on the ways in which activity systems interact with each other or are embedded in larger systems of activity (see Figure 8.3). In this way, we might explore how the activity system associated with an academic journal and an open-access book series might interact with each or otherwise influence each other, perhaps through shared membership, shared goals (objects), similar rules (sometimes referred to as *norms*) or reliance on the same or similar tools. This third-stage approach might also be used to explore how an open-access book series is embedded within other (and perhaps overlapping) activity systems, such as academic publishing and professional communities.

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studies, see Bazerman and Russell (2003a, 2003b) and Russell (2009).

14   Some scholars (e.g., Behrend, 2014; Ho et al., 2019) view Leontiev's elaboration of Vygotsky's model as a second phase in the development of activity theory. Since Vygotsky and Leontiev were not only contemporaries but collaborators, my sense is that their work might more reasonably be viewed as falling within the first stage.
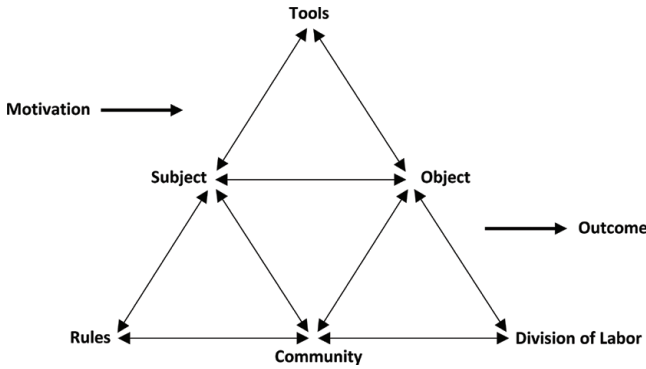
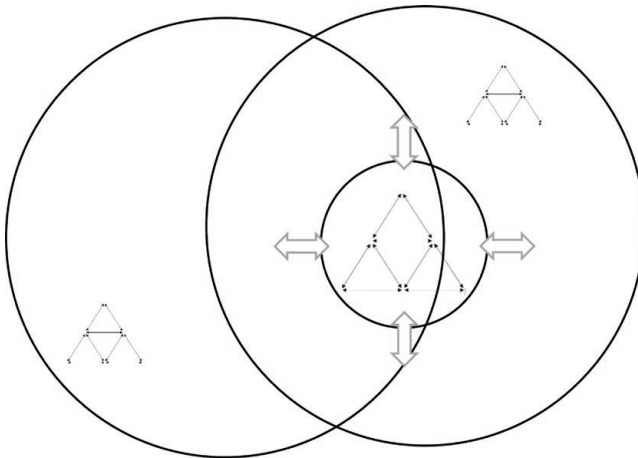Figure 8.2. Engeström's model of activity theory

Figure 8.3. Interactions among embedded and overlapping activity systems

Over the past three decades, activity theory has been used to explore a wide range of complex systems. Scholars have focused on writing studies (Bazerman & Russell, 2003a; Russell, 1995; 2009), instructional technology (Behrend, 2014; Chung, 2019), distributed leadership (Ho et al., 2015; Takoeva, 2017), design thinking (Winstanley, 2019; Zahedi & Tessier, 2018), education (Abdullah, 2014; Al-Huneini et al., 2020; Carvalho, 2015; Pearson, 2009), human computer interaction (Draper, 1993; Kaptelinin & Nardie, 2012; Nardi, 1995), and software development (Dennehy & Conboy, 2017; Hoffman et al., 2020), to name only a few areas.

In the case of the WAC Clearinghouse, I found activity theory in general, and Engeström's model in particular, to be a useful framework within which to understanding how groups can collaborate on projects even in the face of limited communication and interaction. I had worried that, faced with a growing

number of journals, book series, and resource-development projects, the Clearinghouse would eventually collapse under its own weight. Drawing on activity theory, I began to understand how the Clearinghouse's loosely defined structure might be a strength rather than a weakness. Each individual member of the collaborative network—as I write this, a group of more than 180 scholars working as editors, publishers, reviewers, editorial board members, or project developers—contributes to one or more distinct projects. Communication occurs as needed, with the editors of book series and journals and the leaders of groups working on CompPile and various resource-development projects reaching out for support as needed—and otherwise acting independently to pursue a shared vision of the larger goals of the Clearinghouse initiative. Operating within the larger Clearinghouse mission of providing barrier- and cost-free access to scholarly work, each group sets its own goals and pursues them on its own timeline. The only limiting factors are financial support, individual expertise, the capabilities of the tools we use, and the time individuals are able to contribute to the project. I've tried to capture the nature of this activity as a set of overlapping spheres of activity (see Figure 8.4).

Figure 8.4. Overlapping activities in the WAC Clearinghouse

Eventually, I came to realize that the Clearinghouse mission, broadly shared among the members of the collaborative, was compelling enough—and sufficiently well situated in the rewards structures of the field and individual academic programs and institutions—that it could survive, and perhaps even flourish, as a decentralized project. For this particular project, the idea of a publishing collaborative, understood through the lens of activity theory, has provided a useful strategy for understanding how similar projects might develop and succeed.

THE GROWTH OF OPEN-ACCESS BOOK PUBLISHING AND THE EMERGENCE OF PUBLISHING COLLABORATIVES

Over the past decade, open-access book publishing has become more common in writing studies. This growth has been fueled by publishers, professional organizations, and the individual and collective efforts of writing scholars.

In some cases, these efforts have been undertaken by traditional publishers. During its acquisition by University Press of Colorado, for example, Utah State University Press placed PDF editions of books published prior to 2011 into Utah State's digital commons (digitalcommons.usu.edu). In addition to the books it co-published with the WAC Clearinghouse, Parlor Press has released several books in open-access formats. And the Conference on College Composition and Communication recently partnered with the WAC Clearinghouse to release some of the books in its Studies in Writing and Rhetoric series in open-access formats.

Individual scholars, often working with established publishers or organizations, have also released books in open-access formats. Cheryl Ball and Drew Loewe's edited collection *Bad Ideas About Writing* (textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/), for example, is widely used, as are two of Chuck Bazerman's textbooks— *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines* and *Involved: Writing for College, Writing for Your Self* (see wac.colostate.edu/repository/resources/writing/textbooks/).

In other cases, scholars in writing studies have written and released textbooks as part of the open-educational resources (OER) movement. Many OER textbooks have been supported by initiatives such as the Open SUNY Textbook Project (oer.suny.edu). Other OER textbooks have emerged through partnerships with organizations such as Lumen Learning (lumenlearning.com), and local institutional initiatives, such as *Open English @ SLCC* (openenglishatslcc. pressbooks.com).

In still other cases, open-access books have been published by initiatives similar to the earliest open-access journals. These can be characterized as publishing collaboratives that share, to a greater or lesser extent, the ethos of the WAC

Clearinghouse. Two of these collaboratives—the Computers and Composition Digital Press and Writing Spaces—were launched prior to 2010, while three others—Intermezzo, the Sweetland Digital Publishing Collaborative, and WLN Digital Edited Collections—were established in the past decade. While some of these initiatives grew out of established projects, such as the journals *enculturation*, and *WLN*, others were launched by scholars who saw a need for open-access books in a particular area.

Collectively, these publishing collaboratives rely on distributed, cooperative work that can be understood through the lens of activity theory. Their long-term success, as I will argue in the following section, will depend largely on how well they can establish themselves as credible sources of quality work, develop effective and efficient organizational structures, and obtain (or eliminate the need for) financial support.

BUILDING FRAMEWORKS FOR THE SUCCESS OF PUBLISHING COLLABORATIVES

Activity theory offers a robust set of tools for exploring the degree to which the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter have been able to ensure academic quality, establish credibility within the field of writing studies, develop effective organizational structures, and identify sources of support. While each of the publishing collaboratives discussed below has taken different routes to achieving success, and while some of them have not existed long enough to provide clear evidence that they can endure, the strategies they have employed offer insights about their quality, credibility, and sustainability.

Ensuring Quality

For serious scholars, a primary object of any publishing activity is ensuring that the scholarly work it produces and distributes is of high quality. Quality, in this sense, includes the scholarly argument or observations contained in a publication, the design of the publication, and design and content of the website used to access it. That said, for the majority of editors, the most important aspects of the publishing process are designing and managing a peer-review and manuscript-development process that is consistent with the highest standards of their field of study.

The work involved in producing a quality publication can be viewed through the lens of Engeström's model of activity theory as activities involving *subjects* (the editors and reviewers) using *mediating tools* (codified peer-review processes, digital communication systems, web-based submission systems, and digital

production and design programs, among other possibilities) to accomplish the *object* of producing high quality scholarly publications. In the case of open-access publishing collaboratives, this activity is launched through the *motivation* to distribute scholarly work in ways that achieve an *outcome* that ensures access to all scholars (and other potential audiences) who can view work on the web. This work is shaped by the *rules* (norms and regulations, such as copyright rules and creative commons licenses) of the *community* (more specifically the group involved in a particular publishing collaborative and more generally the larger field of study to which the work will contribute) and the *division of labor* required to produce that work. Division of labor, for example, might lead some members of the collaborative to work primarily on developing a manuscript (see Figure 8.5) and others to focus on designing and distributing the final publication.
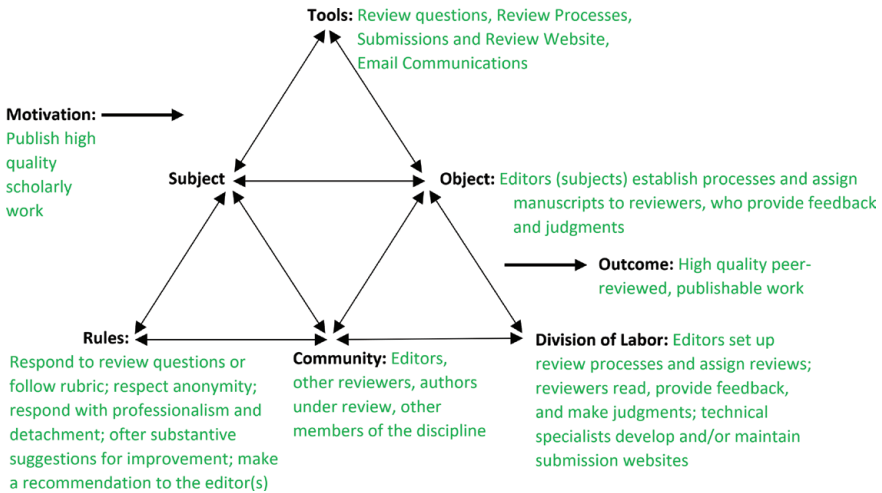
Tools: Review questions, Review Processes, Submissions and Review Website, Email Communications

Motivation: Publish high quality scholarly work

Subject

Object: Editors (subjects) establish processes and assign manuscripts to reviewers, who provide feedback and judgments

Outcome: High quality peer-reviewed, publishable work

Rules: Respond to review questions or follow rubric; respect anonymity; respond with professionalism and detachment; offer substantive suggestions for improvement; make a recommendation to the editor(s)

Community: Editors, other reviewers, authors under review, other members of the discipline

Division of Labor: Editors set up review processes and assign reviews; reviewers read, provide feedback, and make judgments; technical specialists develop and/or maintain submission websites

Figure 8.5. Depicting a peer review process via Engeström's model of activity theory

Quality can also be viewed in terms of embedded and overlapping activity systems. Critically, while the specific peer-review processes employed by a given publishing initiative—for example, a journal or book series—might be somewhat different from those employed by another initiative, those processes are shaped by larger activity systems. For example, the Perspectives on Writing book series, which is published by the WAC Clearinghouse, uses peer-review processes that are shaped by both Clearinghouse policies and the field of writing studies. Recent work on anti-racism, for instance, has affected reviewer and editor attention to citation practices, among other issues centering on equity and inclusion. In the case of the Perspectives on Writing series, Clearinghouse policies shape how peer-review is carried out. And those policies, in turn, are shaped by discussions in the larger field of writing studies.

The publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter employ peer-review processes that are consistent with those used by all reputable publishers within the field: reviews are conducted anonymously, feedback that will lead to improvements in a document is expected, and reviewers are required to provide recommendations about the disposition of a manuscript. Only Intermezzo uses a modified system, notes editor and co-founder Jeff Rice, who explained that he has tended to depart from the more typical acquisition and development process associated with longer works. He does not, for example, require a proposal for a work. Nor does he require that work in the series make arguments in a traditional academic sense:

> I have not, as editor and publisher, worried about traditional approaches to scholarly writing that might include literature review, or specific citation practices (though we use MLA for style), or that have to make an argument, etc. I want authors to explore their ideas of interest in novel ways (personal communication, May 19, 2019).

In addition to peer-review activities, other activities that contribute to quality include the choice of and use of tools that support the design and distribution of published work. These tools can include software programs such as InDesign, Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Dreamweaver, Adobe Acrobat, Photoshop, and PressBooks; website management platforms such as WordPress and Mura CMS; web tagging tools such as HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets); and database query languages such as SQL (Structured Query Language). Each of these programs, platforms, and languages is the focus of its own activity systems. To the extent that their use by publishers overlaps with other, often larger activity systems, including both the groups who define and extend them and users who employ them for purposes far different from publishing, the activities within those systems will shape the work—at least to some extent—performed in the service of open-access publishing. Beyond these tools, embedded and overlapping activity systems might also include various open-access publishing organizations—including the Creative Commons organization (creativecommons.org) and the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (oaspa.org)—as well as users of publishing systems such as Open Monograph Press (pkp.sfu.ca/omp/) and Vega Academic Publishing System (www.vegapublish.info/).

Quality, then, is influenced not only by the motivations of the subjects who work within a publishing collaborative to create excellent open-access publications but also by the larger activity systems in which their work is embedded and the numerous overlapping activity systems that are associated with the tools used to carry out their work.

ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

Credibility in scholarly publishing is largely earned by ensuring that publications advance existing scholarly conversations. Because judgments of credibility are subjective, however, the leaders of a publishing initiative might adopt strategies that signal competence and quality. The publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter have adopted strategies such as aligning their book series with established presses and professional organizations, working to attract contributions of scholarly work from established authors, publishing work that departs in innovative ways from mainstream publications, seeking nominations for awards, and engaging in activities typical of established commercial publishers.

In 2001 and 2002, the leaders of the Clearinghouse faced challenges associated with credibility as they worked with *Writing Selves/Writing Societies*. While some of the initial work on the collection, such as solicitation of chapters and initial reviews of proposals, had been completed by the time Bazerman and Russell brought the book to the Clearinghouse, we found ourselves grappling with other questions, such as the formats to use for publishing, how best to incorporate video into the book, and how to obtain an ISBN and register the book with the Library of Congress.[15] Most important, we had to consider the impact of releasing the book in digital formats on the careers of the chapter authors, several of whom were untenured. In our communications with the authors, we explained our goals for the project, stressed the quality of our peer review process, explained that it would be registered with the Library of Congress, and called attention to the reputations of members of the Clearinghouse editorial board.

Eventually, the authors of all but two chapters agreed to continue with the project. One was a junior scholar who expressed concern about the reception a digital publication might receive from her tenure committee. Another set of co–authors did not respond to our message. During the editorial development process, other authors dropped out for a range of editorial reasons, such as missed deadlines, insufficient revision, and the outcome of final peer reviews.

Later, we would publish an article in *First Monday* (Bazerman et al., 2008) that reported that none of the contributors to *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* experienced difficulties and that, in fact, the chapters in the book had been cited at an unusually high rate. Since its publication in 2003, the book has been downloaded, in whole or as individual chapters, more than 500,000 times. Interestingly, despite the age of the book, it was downloaded roughly 8,000 times in the past year.[16]

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15   ISBN is the acronym for International Standard Book Number, a unique identifier assigned to a book. To learn more, see isbn-international.org/content/what-isbn.

16   Because browsers typically download PDF documents in multiple concurrent streams,

Concerns about credibility were also expressed by the founders of the Computers and Composition Digital Press. In a 2009 email exchange with Gail Hawisher, Cindy Selfe, and the editorial team that produced the first book in the series, Selfe noted that she saw affiliation with a university press as a useful strategy for addressing concerns about pushing boundaries:

> Our effort has always been to publish projects that are 1.) innovative and creative (in terms of their digital instantiation) and 2.) recognizable as peer-reviewed, university press products *so that authors can use these projects in tenure and promotion cases with some confidence that they will be acknowledged by other scholars as publications characterized by rigorous review by specialist scholars in the field. This approach, we recognize, will entail walking a fine line between innovation and conventional values.* (personal communication, May 17, 2009; original emphasis)

The decision to align efforts with an established publisher or journal was made, either from the start or at a later time, by each of the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter. Computers and Composition Digital Press was launched as an imprint of Utah State University Press. Intermezzo and WLN Digital Edited Collections have operated since their founding within the structure of two leading academic journals, *Enculturation* and *WLN*, respectively. The Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative was launched in partnership with the University of Michigan Press. And Writing Spaces has partnered with Parlor Press and the WAC Clearinghouse since its founding. The WAC Clearinghouse has long partnered with Parlor Press, although that decision was made at a time when Parlor Press was still viewed as an experimental project. Later, the Clearinghouse would expand its publishing partnerships to include University Press of Colorado and the Conference on College Composition and Communication, both of which distribute print editions of its books.

Reflecting the influence of larger academic publishing activity systems, publishing collaboratives within the field of writing studies have also adopted practices associated with conventional publishing. Most assign ISBNs and register their work with the Library of Congress. And some assign DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) to their publications.[17] A number of collaboratives engage

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basing download statistics on "hits" can lead to inflated estimates. In contrast, I count how often a file is visited. Even so, just as there is a distinction between placing a print book on a shelf unread and spending time with it, opening a file and reading it are quite different things.

17   The Clearinghouse developed an automated, database-supported system that creates DOIs for each of its publications (books, book chapters, and journal articles). In 2020, it completed a two-year effort to assign and register DOIs for more than 2,500 publications.

in marketing, including the WAC Clearinghouse, which recently created the position of associate publisher for marketing and advancement. Most publishing collaboratives also seek nominations of their books for awards. In the past six years, for example, books published by the Clearinghouse have won seven awards from CCCC, the CWPA, and *Computers and Composition*.

Viewed within the context of activity theory, these efforts to establish credibility can be viewed primarily as aligning publishing activities with that of overlapping activity systems. Working with an established university press, for example, allows a publishing collaborative to benefit from previous efforts to establish workflows and productive division of labor, develop norms, and identify useful tools. Similarly, aligning efforts with norms, workflows, and tools used more generally within a discipline—and in other communities related to publishing, such as web developers and designers—provides important benefits.

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

Organizational structure plays a critical role in the success and sustainability of an academic publishing initiative. While some journals and book series are launched with the expectation that, over time, they will cease publication, most are intended to enjoy long-term success. Within academic publishing, durable organizational structures typically provide clarity regarding individual and group responsibility, facilitate communication among members, and provide clear guidelines for growth and leadership transitions.

The organizational structures adopted by most of the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter resemble most closely that of an academic journal (see Table 8.1). These collaboratives have one or more lead editors, editorial team members, and editorial boards (most of which are working boards whose members both advise on policy and carry out peer review).

For these publishing collaboratives, the division of labor and the use of tools to support peer review, copy editing, design, and production follow a pattern similar to that of many open-access journals. Most of the publishing collaboratives operate in a hierarchical fashion, with roles falling into and expected duties being defined by a familiar pattern of a team of lead editors, editorial staff members, reviewers, and advisory board members. This organizational structure offers clarity through its reliance on long-standing norms regarding peer-review, copy editing, and design. Given a record of success within the field of writing studies, it seems reasonable to expect that this structure will contribute to the success of these initiatives.

Table 8.1. Publishing Collaborative Organization Structure

Collaborative	Lead Editors	Editorial Staff Members	Editorial Board Members	Fellows / Interns	Book Series	Autonomy
Computers and Composition Digital Press	3	4	66	4	1	Imprint of USUP, but operates autonomously
Writing Spaces	3	8	24	N/A	1	Autonomous
Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative *	3	N/A	8	1 or more	1	UM Press approves all contracts
Intermezzo	3	5	8	N/A	1	Autonomous, but under the enculturation umbrella
WLN Digital Editions	5	4	N/A	N/A	1	A production of the WLN journal
The WAC Clearinghouse	25**	14	47	1 or more	8	Autonomous

* Sweetland DRC editorial staff are drawn from the University of Michigan Press; reviewers are members of the computers and writing community.

** The Clearinghouse has a publisher, six associate publishers, and 18 series editors. Fourteen associate editors work with book series. Interns are usually given a title of associate editor for the duration of their work with a series. In addition to the series listed here, it republishes books from NCTE, USUP, and other publishers.

Equally important, the organizational structures adopted by each of the publishing collaboratives promote open and frequent communication—and they appear to reflect an emphasis on consensus-based decision making even in contexts that involve strong leadership from senior scholars. WLN Digital Edited Collections provides a good example of the interplay between a senior scholar and her fellow editors. "We have traditional titles, but no hierarchy in that we all have equal voices in decision-making and do a lot of emailing back and forth until we're comfortable with a decision," WLN editor in chief Muriel Harris wrote in response to my questions about their initiative (personal communication, June 4, 2019). Co-editor Lee Ann Glowzenski concurred, pointing out that "all of our decisions are made in conversation with one another" and explaining that "we all respect each other's ideas and strengths enough that if one member of the editorial team argues very strongly for or against a piece, the rest of us are very happy to listen" (personal communication, June 4, 2019). Anne Ruggles

Gere and Naomi Silver, who responded to my questions about their publishing collaborative, expressed similar sentiments, nothing that they "meet only rarely in person but share common goals and a non-hierarchical approach for the publishing we do" (personal communication, June 4, 2019).

It is unclear how well the organizational structures developed by each of the publishing collaboratives will support growth or leadership change. Since each of the collaboratives relies largely on volunteer labor (the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, which is an academic unit within the University of Michigan, is an exception), growth might lead to stresses on a collaborative and its members. Succession planning might be complicated by the volunteer nature of these initiatives, which depend on a level of enthusiasm that new members might not share. However, if the collaboratives employ strategies similar to those used by academic journals to select new leaders, successful transitions might occur.

The WAC Clearinghouse stands out as an exception to the organization structure typically adopted by the other publishing collaboratives, largely because it is the only collaborative that publishes more than one book series. To some extent, the organizational structure of the Clearinghouse resembles that of an academic press, with a publisher, several associate publishers, an editorial board, the editors of CompPile, editors of book series and journals, and a large number of editorial staff and reviewers for those book series and journals. It lacks, however, the hierarchical reporting structure typical of academic presses, where directors set priorities and manage staff workflow. Instead, the Clearinghouse employs a web-like structure in which volunteers take on work that is carried out as time becomes available. The primary function of the publisher and associate publishers is to provide coordination among and resources for the initiatives that fall under the Clearinghouse umbrella. In addition to funding, which is discussed in the next section, these resources include publishing tools (software and web-based tools that support book design, DOI creation and registration, and peer review of submissions), guidance on issues ranging from use of copyrighted materials to issues associated with human research, and the issuance of publishing contracts and memorandums of understanding. Certainly, allocating financial, technical, and other resources provides some degree of control over the activity of the collaborative, and in this sense the work done by the publisher and associate publishers resembles that of the director and associate directors of an academic press. Differences exist, however, in the lack of reporting lines between the publisher and the editors of Clearinghouse book series and journals, the lack of performance evaluations, and the ability of the editors to set their own publishing priorities within the framework of the larger Clearinghouse mission.

IDENTIFYING AND ACQUIRING SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

Given enough funding, almost anything is possible. For the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter, however, concerns about funding typically take a back seat to those about volunteer time and expertise. It is possible, particularly in projects that publish only one or two books per year, to take advantage of institutionally-provided office space, computers and software, and web servers in ways that allow books to be published without significant—and in some cases, any—funding. Certainly, some costs cannot be avoided. If a book is to carry an ISBN and DOI, for example, costs will be incurred. However, by partnering with a university press or an established journal, as many of the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter have done, even those minimal costs might be avoided. Volunteer labor can be devoted to reviewing and developing manuscripts, carrying out copy editing, designing books, releasing them on the web, and publicizing their existence. And all of this can be done without the direct expenditure of funds, much as it is done with many open-access journals.

That said, more complicated projects—such as those carried out by the Computers and Composition Digital Press, the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, and the WAC Clearinghouse—often require time and expertise that cannot easily be obtained from volunteers. As websites grow larger and more complex, for example, institutional technical support might be required. If publications are to be listed by database vendors, librarians might be asked to provide support. If copy editors are hired, websites are hosted by vendors, or expenditures of any kind are to be charged to institutional accounts, university staff will be required to ensure that proper financial processes are followed.

The decision to partner with a publisher, which each of the collaboratives discussed here have made, albeit in different ways, can affect not only finances but also operations. For Writing Spaces, partnering with Parlor Press and the WAC Clearinghouse allowed it to focus on developing and reviewing its books, leaving production and design to its partners. For the Clearinghouse, partnering with Parlor Press and University Press of Colorado has not only helped it produce print editions at no additional cost but also has helped improve its production, design, registration, and marketing processes. In contrast, for the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, which works closely with University of Michigan Press, the relationship is more complicated. The UM Press played a key role in establishing the Collaborative, and it has helped it engage in an ambitious and successful set of operations. Unlike the other collaboratives, however, which operate largely independently, the Collaborative must gain approval from the Press for its book acquisition and development decisions. It also pays a subvention fee to the Press to cover some of the costs of designing and distributing

its books. Gere and Silver noted that their publication process involves extensive communication between Collaborative team members and Press staff:

> Once [a book] has been accepted, it works its way through both a traditional print publication process and a process . . . to create and house digital assets. In the case of fully born digital projects, the authors work with the DRC website manager to house the project on the DRC site, and simultaneously work with the UM Press to create a print-based version that meets their criteria for accessibility and sustainability. The final publications may appear in print, e-book, open access linear digital publication, and open access interactive digital publication. (personal communication, June 4, 2019)

A key aspect of sustainability is identifying and responding to contradictions, which Engeström (1993) describes as conflicts that arise within an activity system. Within activity theory, contradictions are best viewed as opportunities for change, perhaps through refining motivations or redefining outcomes, perhaps through recognizing that a tool is ill-suited to a particular task, or perhaps through identifying conflicting rules or norms or challenges associated with how effort is distributed. The need to provide funding for the publishing activities of the Clearinghouse, for example, led its publisher to seek donations which, in turn, needed to be housed in a tax-free account. This led to interactions with the Colorado State University Foundation, which has worked with the Clearinghouse for more than a decade. More fundamentally, the contradictions between academic reward structures and "work on a website" led the Clearinghouse to reinvent itself in 1998, and subsequent contradictions with the norms associated with an academic journal led in 2001 and 2002 to yet another reinvention as an academic publisher. A subsequent contradiction occurred when Parlor Press was unable to serve as the publishing partner for an expanded set of book series, and the Clearinghouse established a partnership with University Press of Colorado. These changes were not without conflict—much discussion was involved before they were carried out—but they involved important changes in the organizational structure, funding, and operations of the Clearinghouse.

For the WAC Clearinghouse, two important contradictions remain. First, the motivation to expand its collection of open-access publications conflicts with its precarious funding stream. To date, funding has been provided from donations to a charitable account hosted by the Colorado State University Foundation, proceeds from sales of print editions of original books, and (until recently) internal funding made available intermittently during a 14-year period when the publisher served as an administrator at Colorado State University. While the amount of

funding provided from institutional budgets was never large, the Clearinghouse no longer has access to this source of funding. Still, the question of the long-term viability of the Clearinghouse will likely focus on whether it can continue to cover its costs. In contrast, the more focused efforts of the other collaboratives suggest that funding issues will be less of an issue for their long-term success.

Second, like many other startups, the Clearinghouse has benefited from the energy and enthusiasm of its founders. As its leadership ages, the question of succession must be addressed. While efforts have been made to establish rules for succession, it is not clear whether a fully scholar-run, independent organization will be able to operate as effectively as it has when new leaders step in.

TAKING STOCK: THE IMPACT OF OPEN-ACCESS BOOK PUBLISHING

Since the mid-2000s, the number of open-access books produced by the publishing collaboratives highlighted in this chapter has grown steadily. By the end of 2005, six original open-access books had been released by the WAC Clearinghouse and *RhetNet*. In the next five years, a period which saw the founding of the Computers and Composition Digital Press and Writing Spaces, a dozen open-access books were published. In the next five years, during which the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative and Intermezzo were established, 38 new open-access books were released. And from 2016 through 2020, a period during which WLN Digital Editions was launched, the number of new open-access books produced by the collaboratives grew to 65. This reflects both a growing number of publishing collaboratives and increases in the number of books published. Importantly, while the Clearinghouse makes up more than 60 percent of the books produced by these publishing collaboratives to date, its share has declined as more new collaboratives have been established (see Table 8.2).

Books published by open-access publishing collaboratives now exceeds the annual output of several of the traditional academic presses that focus on writing studies. For example, the catalogs at Southern Illinois University Press and the University of Pittsburgh Press indicate that, between the beginning of 2016 and the end of 2020, the two presses published a total of 29 books related to writing studies—not quite half as many books as were produced by the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter. Certainly, publishers such as NCTE and Utah State University Press have produced far more books in writing studies—and open-access book publishers are unlikely to surpass their output in the near to intermediate future. My sense, however, is that we are at a turning point in publishing in our field. The future will be kind to open-access book publishing, much in the way that the past two decades have been kind to open-access journal publishing.

Table 8.2. Original Open-Access Monographs, Collections, and Conference Proceedings by Time Period

	Pre-2006	2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020
RhetNet	2			
WAC Clearinghouse	4	9	26	35
Computers and Composition Digital Press		2	10	9
Writing Spaces		1	1	1
Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative			1	6
Intermezzo				12
WLN Digital Editions				2
Total	6	12	38	65

For several reasons, I believe this assessment is well founded. First, the technology that allows scholars to become publishers has become easier to use. Whether you are using open-source projects such as Open Monograph Press or Vega Academic Publishing System, or you are using commercial software tools such as Adobe InDesign or PressBooks, it is far easier to manage the technical processes of book publishing than it was even a decade ago. And while learning a program such as InDesign, for example, is not a simple process, it is one that can be accomplished with a modest investment of time—and that investment can be reduced by working with colleagues who have already gained some control over a particular program or publishing system. Improvements in publishing technology are making it increasingly attractive to consider launching new book series outside of (or alongside, in the case of the Clearinghouse, the Computers and Composition Digital Press, and the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative) traditional academic presses.

Second, and with some exceptions, open-access book publishing is not influenced by many of the economic forces that shape the publishing decisions made by traditional academic presses. Some book projects are innovative and important, yet they are unlikely to result in enough sales to be practical for a traditional press to take on. This means that some worthy projects will not find a publisher. In contrast, open-access publishing collaboratives—which rely on volunteer, distributed labor and can take advantage of institutional infrastructure—can produce books for a lower cash outlay than traditional presses (largely because our salaries and benefits are already paid by our institutions, and because many of us can rely on our institutions' servers, workstations, software, office space, and technical support staff). Simply put, publishing collaboratives have strong economic advantages over academic presses, which must include in their calculation of the expenses associated with the publication of a book costs such

as salaries, retirement and health benefits, computers and software, web servers, and rent, among other expenses.[18]

Third, much of the work of developing new books has long been done by scholars who serve as series editors and peer reviewers. The editors and reviewers working with publishers routinely engage in early discussions about book proposals, offer support for the development of calls for proposals for edited collections, engage in peer reviews, and provide advice about manuscript preparation. This work is largely "counted" during annual and promotion reviews. It seems reasonable to expect that what we now count will expand to include work associated with designing and producing scholarly work. And while this expansion is certainly happening too slowly for many of us (see the discussion of reward structures in Day et al., 2013), it is occurring nonetheless.

Fourth, open-access publications are as or more effective in shaping scholarly discourse than those published by traditional academic presses. The books produced by the publishing collaboratives discussed in this chapter have won several of our field's book-of-the-year awards. They enjoy high levels of citation—and thus impact. And because of this, increasing numbers of scholars are seeing open-access publishing not only as acceptable—even normal—but also as preferable, given its impact and connection to issues of equity and access.

Finally, open-access publishing appears to have far greater international reach than traditional publishing. In 2020, for example, the WAC Clearinghouse website received 3.1 million visits visitors from 1.4 million unique IP addresses and saw roughly 2.8 million downloads of books and articles. Of those visitors, more than 40 percent came from outside the United States. The site's logs recorded visits from more than 240 countries in six continents. Growing activity in the Clearinghouse's International Exchanges on the Study of Writing and its recently launched Latin American Section have certainly contributed to those numbers. A recent webinar by the Latin American Section attracted more than 1,400 registrants from 47 countries. Access to the web also plays a role in the numbers of visitors seen by the Clearinghouse, but it seems clear that longevity, a growing catalog of high-quality, peer-reviewed books and journals, the Comp-Pile database, and efforts to promote the Clearinghouse through participation in and sponsorship of conferences outside the United States have made an impact.

Open-access book publishing, particularly that occurring through publishing collaboratives, will also have an impact on traditional academic publishers. As increasing numbers of books are released in open-access formats, traditional

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18   As one of the collection editors pointed out, it's important to avoid minimizing the amount of volunteer labor that goes into each Clearinghouse book. While the Clearinghouse pays only about $2,000 to produce a book (primarily for copy editing), the value of volunteer labor is significant. Typically, production and design for one of its book takes 30 hours. Some require far more.

publishers will seek other ways to support their operations. Academic publishers are already participating in open-access initiatives such as Knowledge Unlatched (knowledgeunlatched.org), which uses funding from universities and foundations to release books from established university presses in open-access formats. Academic publishers are also exploring a model rooted in the 14th century that has great promise—shifting responsibility for publishing back to universities and colleges. Librarians have been engaged in these discussions for many years, and some academic presses have found new homes and more stable funding within libraries. This is an important shift, one that can sustain the knowledge and expertise of our academic presses in ways that allow them to continue the important work of sustaining scholarly discourse, work they have engaged in for centuries.

It is also a shift that would open the door to strong partnerships between academic presses and open-access book publishing, along the lines of those already established by the Computers and Composition Digital Press and the WAC Clearinghouse with the University Press of Colorado.[19] As the partnership between the Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado demonstrates, sales of print books can be relatively high (and can exceed, in some cases, the average sales figures for traditional books) even when the book is being given away in open-access formats. And while the sales for any of the Clearinghouse's print editions only rarely generate enough revenue to cover their production costs, those that do suggest a path forward that includes a way for open-access publishing to be seen as a strategy that fits within the larger approaches taken by traditional academic presses.

Academic publishing is at an inflection point. I expect that, as a field, we will turn increasingly toward open-access book publishing. I expect that we will see university and college scholars taking greater control over the production and distribution of books. And I expect that we will see a growing recognition of the importance of work associated not only with writing books but also with developing, designing, and publishing them as well. These changes may take longer than the advocates of open-access publishing collaboratives might like, but they will happen. The role that traditional academic publishers will play in this process is uncertain, but regardless of whether they embrace it, resist it, or simply hope it goes away one thing is clear: change is coming.

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19   The Utah State University Press, which supports the C&C Digital Press, is an imprint of the University Press of Colorado.

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