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TECHNICAL WRITING, SERVICE LEARNING, AND A REARTICULATION OF RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND SERVICE

Jeffrey T. Grabill

Tensions among research, teaching, and service are real, and they are unproductive when they limit the type of work valued by the university (see Sosnoski 1994). There have been some notable attempts to rethink the work of the university and establish new ways to value a range of faculty initiatives that don't fit into the hierarchy of research, teaching, and service (for example, Boyer 1997). One of the more interesting attempts is the 1996 report by the MLA Commission on Professional Service, which takes as one of its starting places the imbalance among research, teaching, and service. The commission notes that service in particular is almost completely ignored or seen as an activity lacking "substantive idea content and significance" (171). There is nothing new either in the university's hierarchy of values or in the denigration of service. Yet this taxonomy of faculty work should be disconcerting to those of us who believe that a university must have long-term commitments to serve the community in which it is situated. But perhaps more problematic is the view of service as an intellectual wasteland.

My most general concern in this chapter is this view of service as lacking substance and significance. (I will focus, however, on community service learning rather than departmental or university service.) To be sure, the MLA Commission on Professional Service offers an intriguing rearticulation of research, teaching, and service into "intellectual work" and "academic and professional citizenship," with research, teaching, and service recast as sites of activity that can be found in both categories. I am interested in a tighter refiguring of these sites of activity for two reasons. The first is more general and is based on an argument that "service" is actually an epistemologically productive site of activity. It is this issue that serves as a framework for the chapter. My second reason for

working toward a tighter configuration of research, teaching, and service comes specifically from the strengths, purposes, and applications of technical and professional writing. This discipline, perhaps more so than others, is immediately relevant to communities around a given university, is a powerful place from which to serve those communities, and is a discipline that will grow in sophistication from work outside the university.[1] What I have described in these last few sentences is not "mere" service but also combines teaching, program design, and research into a matrix of interests and activities. My argument is this: An approach to technical and professional writing that works toward a rearticulation of research, teaching, and service is a powerful way to do academic work and can positively alter the meaning and value of technical and professional writing itself as a site of activity.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL WRITING, SERVICE LEARNING, AND PROGRAM DESIGN

If my experiences at conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the Association for Teachers of Technical Writing, and the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication are any indication, service learning is increasingly common.[2] But why? In a sense, service-learning projects are an extension of technical writing pedagogies that have been in place for some time. The use of cases in writing courses, for example, is commonplace despite the feeling of some that the fictive scenarios provide inadequate audience constructs (for example, Artemeva, Logie, and St-Martin 1999). For many, including those whom I worked with at Georgia State University, cases provide a rich context for learning about writing, organizations, and other complex relations associated with writing (such as politics and ethics), and so we have written cases for a number of writing courses. Technical writing teachers have long used writing projects in which students work on solving problems for real clients, or what Huckin (1997) calls "community writing projects" (see the first few pages of Huckin's article for a sense of the number of programs that employed such pedagogical practices in the late 1990s). Yet, at the time Huckin wrote his article on technical writing and community service, he knew of no technical writing programs that employed service learning. That situation has certainly changed, and there are two reasons for this, I think: service learning has caught fire across the university within the

last ten years, and technical and professional writing programs have been well positioned to embrace and enhance the pedagogy. Because of the focus on complex problems and real clients, then, service learning is in many ways a natural extension of pedagogies common in technical and professional writing classes.

My concern in this chapter isn't primarily with service learning, but rather with programmatic connections to service learning. Still, service-learning teaching is at the core of the changed practices I'm arguing for here, and so I begin with my approach to service learning. Like Huckin (1997), who articulated his goals for service learning in technical writing as (1) helping students develop writing skills, (2) helping students develop civic awareness, and (3) helping the larger community by helping area nonprofits, my goals for service learning are to take part in long-term community change by meeting the needs of community partners and to provide rich and compelling contexts for student learning. These goals are actually quite complicated in how they play out. In fact, they bleed into all aspects of our writing program and my work at Georgia State.

Setting up service-learning projects takes some time. The ultimate goal is to make service-learning programmatic (more on this later), but currently I am the only faculty member who consistently teaches courses with service-learning components. The process actually runs throughout the year. I have contacts at my university's office of community service learning who occasionally funnel projects my way. I am sometimes asked by our AmeriCorp program to speak at training and information sessions with members of community-based nonprofits. These opportunities often result in new projects and relationships. And I have created a network of contacts in Atlanta, with whom I have been working for nearly four years now. These efforts are essential because through them I am trying to build long-term relationships with organizations in the community that make a difference in people's lives; likewise, I am trying to make our professional and technical writing program an organization that also makes a difference in people's lives.

Depending on my teaching and that of interested colleagues, I work with my contacts to come up with seven to fourteen projects each semester, which meet the following criteria:

- The projects meet a real need as articulated by our community partner
- The projects are sophisticated and writing related[3]
- The projects fit into the course time frame (about ten weeks)

The heart of the criteria is that these projects must be of service to the people with whom we are working. When these criteria are met, I begin to address other constraints. Once potential projects are identified, I visit my contacts at their locations to learn about the organization, make sure the site and neighborhood are safe and accessible to students, and further discuss the contours of the project. If my contact person expresses the desire to proceed, I write a letter of understanding, which is based on my university's standard intern contract. This letter is then rewritten by the contact person, if need be, and eventually is given to students as well (who can also add to the letter). Finally, the contact person is invited to class for the first day of the project to see the university, to see the space where students work and learn, and to meet with the group of students who will be working with them.

The students who participate in these projects are diverse in terms of age, race, class, and gender—"typical" students at Georgia State. Although the course serves students from across the university, the majority of students are juniors and seniors from the business school. Technical writing, on the other hand, isn't a true service course. About half the students in technical writing enroll to fulfill requirements for majors other than English; the other half plan to be technical writers upon graduation. The diversity of student experience is useful for service-learning projects because not only do these students have a range of interests and expertise but many also work as professionals and so bring rich histories and skills to our classes.

My approach to service learning is somewhat different from the model typically presented in composition and some technical and professional writing forums. The difference is not really in the pragmatics of setting up or teaching a service-learning project; rather, it is in the institutional framework I am trying to create. Therefore, I am more interested in relationships between the writing program and community-based organizations than I am in student–community agency relationships. In composition studies in particular, the common service-learning model is to have students find projects to work on or to choose from a wide array of projects—usually more projects than can be addressed in a given semester. Student choice, student agency, student voice are valued and for good reason (see Bacon 1997).[4] One goal of service learning is to educate for citizenship and to transform students' understandings of and relationships with the world around them. But my concern with such an approach is that it too often sounds like a low-level colonization of the

communities around a university.⁵ I question, in other words, both the pragmatics and ethics of such an approach. I wonder if students can find appropriate projects with community organizations within the time frame allotted. But more importantly, my experience with nonprofits suggests that students continually coming to them looking for projects takes valuable time and tends to raise expectations that might not be met. These expectations can create situations that hurt rather than help university-community relationships. In other words, I have serious doubts about that ability of service learning to accomplish either its service or its learning goals without a solid institutional home. Communities can indeed be hurt if they are in fact *burdened* by responding to numerous students looking for projects, particularly if there is no solid commitment that the project will be completed. The primary goal, after all, is to help community-based organizations help their communities; it is to participate in community change. Yet, when the primary motivation and concern is student agency, student learning, and student growth, I think service learning runs a serious risk of doing harm.

To avoid harm (at the very least), service learning in technical and professional writing needs to be part of the writing program. And so let me outline here the theory of institutional design necessary for creating that home. First, meaningful service is connected to long-term and community-driven attempts at change. Students, by the very nature of their position, cannot make the long-term commitments necessary to participate in meaningful community change. Faculty and programs can and so should make themselves available to help communities; we shouldn't be sending students into communities, like missionaries, to find problems. Second, ongoing processes of community and institution building are integral to community change (see Kretzmann and McKnight 1993 for much more on community building and change). Writing teachers and students can participate in community building and change, but only to the extent that we move away from an individual service ethic, which I tend to equate with academic charity (individual classes and students serving others, for example), and toward a community-situated ethic that seeks sustainable change, which I tend to link to (community-defined) issues of justice. Writing programs are far more useful to communities than to individual students and faculty because they provide a context for meaningful student and faculty work. They can do so, however, only if they are designed with a community interface.

I am primarily interested is the relationship between community-based organizations and the writing program because such an institutional relationship is more powerful and potentially more transformative. Service learning must primarily benefit the community partners with whom we work—they must be given preference—and the best way to ensure that this preference happens is to develop meaningful, long-term relationships with them. These relationships must be institutional to be effective. They cannot depend on the charisma of individual students or the commitments of individual faculty members, although they almost always start that way.

At Georgia State, we are attempting to institutionalize service learning within the writing program. At the undergraduate level, we situate service-learning experiences in both technical and business writing classes. Although service learning has never been limited to these classes, they are concentrated within these curricular slots to ensure that students have the option of service-learning experiences during their time with us, an option we encourage. In a larger sense, then, relationships between the writing program and the community are part of the identity of the writing program. Such relationships affect not only what happens in the classroom but also the kinds of experiences we offer students, the types of classes we offer (and will offer), and ultimately, the work we do as a faculty and a program. Service and community involvement, then, flow into other categories of work, and each site of activity—service, teaching, and research—is potentially transformed. In the next section, I will use two service-learning projects to demonstrate this possibility.

REFIGURING RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND SERVICE

The two cases I discuss in this section began with relationships connected to my service-learning efforts. Each case shows how "service" activities can have intellectual substance; how "teaching" can both serve and foster research; and how "research" can serve and instruct.

The first case concerns my involvement with rethinking public policy efforts associated with the local Ryan White Planning Council (see Grabill 2000 for a more complete discussion). The Planning Council is a federally created body that makes decisions with respect to HIV/AIDS care in Atlanta. Most urban areas have such councils. The Planning Council must be composed of individuals who fit a number of categories (everything from health care providers to government officials), and at

least 25 percent of the local Planning Council must be made up of individuals affected by the disease. In addition, the composition of that 25 percent must match the current demographics of the disease (which has become increasingly low-income, non-white females). The theory here is that those most affected by the disease ought to have a significant say in making policy about their care. However, meaningful client involvement isn't easy. In fact, the feeling of many involved with the Atlanta Planning Council is that meaningful client involvement hasn't been achieved: the council hears from too few clients, who represent a rather narrow range of those affected by the disease.

I became involved with the project to address problems of client involvement through a student's service-learning project in one of my technical writing classes. The project in question was completed with Kuhrram (Ko) Hassan, an adolescent-HIV/AIDS educator, who worked for one of the service providers funded by Ryan White legislation. Ko was concerned with generating and documenting client involvement at his agency, which became the focus of the student project. For part of a semester, the student worked with Ko to understand his position, the policies and procedures of the organization, and ways in which he and others at the organization interacted with clients. The student's goal was to create with Ko and others a process by which involvement with clients could be easily facilitated, recorded, and then written about and shared with others.[6] She (the student) produced a short procedures "manual" (a process-flow chart, really), some job descriptions relevant to this process, and a formal report documenting her research and arguing for her work (a "product" and a report are typical of the deliverables for projects like this).

The student project was complicated, and in many respects, the student never finished it (although she did well within the context of the course). During the course of the student project, however, Ko and I began to discuss the larger problem of client involvement that was affecting the Planning Council's policy functions. Our conversations eventually evolved into a research project with two interconnected goals: (1) to improve client involvement in policy making by creating with clients procedures that overcame current barriers and (2) to create documentation of client involvement for use in policy discussions and reports of compliance to the government. So I was invited to help address a problem, and this invitation was framed as research, which was important for the

Planning Council because it gave credibility to voices too easily dismissed as isolated, to evidence from clients too easily ignored as anecdotal, and to client concerns too often dismissed as complaints. For obvious reasons, framing my involvement as research was important to me as well. The time I devoted to this project was significant, and to frame it as "service" or even "teaching" within an institution that still maintains a hierarchy of research, teaching, and service was unwise. More to the point, however, the work I did with the Planning Council *was* research. But it was also a service to that organization and to the people with whom I worked, and initially it was an explicit part of my teaching.

The Planning Council project is important for other reasons as well. Because the project was one of my first service-learning experiences, what I learned changed how I teach technical and professional writing classes. I began to look for technical and professional writing practices in community-based contexts. I began to more fully understand the role of writing and research in public policy processes. And I began to rethink the common ways in which technical and professional writing identified itself as a discipline. For example, I have started to think about what might happen to technical and professional writing if we fully embraced civically focused, nonacademic writing and writing in noncorporate and governmental organizations as a *critical* concern. Certainly, the kinds of questions we would seek to answer in response to these different contexts would change. We would also teach different sorts of writing to a new group of students and collaborate with units within the university we don't currently work with—public health, city planning, and public policy programs, for example. Our writing program designs would similarly change. Service outside the university has been fertile intellectual ground for me because it has forced me to rethink the identity and social value of technical and professional writing both at Georgia State and within the discipline at large.

The second case concerns work that is ongoing. As part of the regular conversations I have with community-based organizations, I became involved with the United Way, who wanted to list our writing program as a "technical support resource" for their grant programs. Through these programs, the United Way funds grassroots organizations that form to solve specific problems in neighborhoods throughout Atlanta. We have worked with a couple of organizations funded by United Way grant programs.

In 1998, I was appointed to an ad hoc United Way committee investigating the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies to

provide data-based maps of neighborhoods and communities to be used by the United Way and other organizations for decision-making regarding needs and services. Students were to provide research and writing expertise to this project. Although that project was soon shelved, I developed a working relationship with Patrick Burke of The Atlanta Project's Office of Data and Policy Analysis, the group supplying the GIS and planning expertise.[7] We agreed that some kind of Web-based interactive database would indeed be a useful tool to neighborhood and other community-based organizations. Such a tool could help them participate more effectively in planning decision- making processes that demanded information and analysis that was tough to acquire (see Sawicki and Craig 1996 for one version of the theory driving this effort).

Work on this project still continues. Our goal is to design with stakeholders from community and neighborhood organizations a Web-based queryable database that returns data in the form of maps.[8] The tough part, of course, is designing it in such a way that it is usable by people with varying experience and literacy levels. In addition, our initial feedback suggests that this tool will be even more useful if it serves more communicative functions—if, for example, it contains spaces for exchanging ideas and spaces for matching people with people and people with resources. For me, this database is a major research project. But it has also become a regular part of my teaching and, through my teaching, a service to some communities.

Early in the project, when Patrick Burke and I were just exploring possibilities, a group of students helped me with research related to access to computers in the city of Atlanta. Our focus was on libraries and other centers that allowed free public access to computers and computer networks. For a Web-based database to work for people associated with grassroots and community organizations, there must be infrastructural access and a host of literacy-related accesses. The student project was focused on mapping infrastructural access in certain neighborhoods and gauging the literacy support (such as documentation) that would be necessary to use Web-based tools. What the students discovered was depressing at best, and it was an eye- opening experience for them, both in terms of the uneven distribution of information technology and in terms of how such inequality deeply affects the project we were working on. Students began to understand that although it would have been easy to design these Web-based tools in a vacuum, such a resource would have failed.

Later, once we had developed a prototype of the Web site, another group of students took on the task of designing the usability research necessary to write the online help, and one of these students, during a later independent study course, took on the task of writing an initial version of the help system. Like the first group of students, this group was forced to confront the complexity of a "real" project; their experiences were both frustrating and exciting. The richness of these contexts for instructional purposes cannot be overstated. The teaching benefits are substantial because they place students in complicated writing contexts and ask them to deploy many of their intellectual skills as writers toward developing a solution. Students also get an opportunity to work closely with faculty on research. This work is not only a relatively rare opportunity but also an intellectually meaningful one. Students don't often get to see what we do, and this observation strikes me as an important part of their education. At the same time, students are given an opportunity to understand aspects of their community and participate in community service. I highlight this project because, like the public policy project, it is an example of how service engagements are productive; and furthermore, it is an example of how students can participate in faculty research, thereby enhancing instruction.

I hope these projects have provided a deeper understanding of the transformative possibilities of service learning, but, more importantly, I hope they illustrate how a tight integration of research, teaching, and service begins to blur distinctions among these three areas, infuses each site of activity with shared energy and actions, and makes the work of students and faculty in technical and professional writing more meaningful and, in my mind, potentially one of the most radical sites of activity in the university.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

My suggestions for rethinking research, teaching, and service begin pragmatically with service learning. The process of service-learning design that I urge others to consider looks something like this model:

1. Develop relationships with others inside and outside the university who are supportive of service learning, who want to participate in service learning, and who are willing to assist in the development of service learning in technical and professional writing.
2. Work to integrate service-learning experiences into the writing program.
3. Begin slowly and small with a few service-learning partners and one

writing class; make sure beforehand that the projects serve the needs of the partner, are curricularly appropriate, and can be completed within a term's timeline.

4. Frame the service-learning projects appropriately in the classroom by showing how such work is meaningful for writing instruction and how service-learning experiences are one way to achieve the larger goals of the university. (Students, in my experience, need to be persuaded to take risks. Persuade them and then reward them for doing so.)

5. Follow up with students and service-learning partners to honestly gauge the student's intellectual and service experiences (reflection) and the nature of the benefit to the partnering agency or organization.

6. Maintain relationships.

This process is one way to institutionalize service learning and increase the possibility that such experiences transform the work of the university. Over time, what counts as "curricularly appropriate" will likely change as views of writing change based on experiences with community organizations. In addition, research opportunities will abound. I see more interesting projects each year than I can possibly do. These opportunities can also filter into graduate programs and theses and dissertations. My point, again, is that embracing and then institutionalizing community involvement is one way to transform the work of university faculty in substantial ways. Research, teaching, and service, as I hope I've shown, tend to blend into one another to more fully become sites of activity where one can teach, serve, and research at the same time.

There are certainly limitations to the approach I have presented. It is time consuming, and project selection and management can be difficult. In addition, when projects don't work well, it causes significant problems for students and community partners. And because the service elements focus on organizations (when we work with organizations that serve the homeless, for example, students may not work directly with the homeless), students don't always see their work as service and don't always reflect on their work in ways that are meaningful. In terms of the larger argument I have been making, it is also telling that I still feel the need to validate the time spent and the work accomplished in terms of my ability to generate research from community-based projects. Finally, my insistence that the more transformative aspects of refiguring research, teaching, and service depend on institutionalizing service learning places a burden on writing programs that some may see as too

significant. It remains to be seen whether we can handle the burdens here at Georgia State.

I see these problems as program design specifications, and I think the following specifications, which move beyond the more concrete service-learning suggestions at the beginning of this section, are more generally useful design heuristics:

- Service learning is unsustainable within and outside the university as an individual initiative; it does not respond well to community-driven needs and will exhaust individual faculty. Service learning must therefore be part of the writing program's design and therefore integrated into the curriculum (but not just slotted into classes; it can and should transform how classes are taught), given administrative support, and rewarded as part of faculty work, perhaps much like the single course release given to most internship supervisors.
- Service learning must be seen as substantive and intellectually rich work and so must be visible and presented in these terms. Its meaningful presence in the writing program and curriculum is one type of visibility, as is its ability to generate research. Service must also be visible in other ways as well, such as a university Web presence in which those involved with service learning can describe its value to the community (through the use of project evaluations, letters of thanks, and project artifacts, for example). Like all good programs, technical and professional writing programs can and should argue for their social value. Service-oriented writing programs help.

Community based work in technical and professional writing allows technical and professional writing students and faculty to work across a number of contexts, with diverse audiences, and on projects of civic significance. I see technical and professional writing as a site of truly radical activity because of our ability to redefine the work of university faculty and students, because of our ability to move among the university, the corporation, and the community, and because of our ability to understand the powerful ways in which writing constructs institutional systems and changes them. We do work of "substantive idea content and significance," and we do it across sites of activity long artificially separated. Continuing this work should be at the center of who we are as teachers, researchers, and citizens.

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NOTES TOWARD A "REFLECTIVE INSTRUMENTALISM"

A Collaborative Look at Curricular Revision in Clemson University's MAPC Program

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The faculty of Clemson University's MAPC program—rhetoricians and professional communications specialists of various kinds—gather this Monday, as we do weekly, to continue our work: designing, implementing, and enhancing the "MAPC," our M.A. program in professional communication. Rich in theory and practice, it's a program benefiting from the attention provided by frequent faculty discussions. Our current task is one that continuing graduate programs take up periodically: reviewing and revising a reading list for a comprehensive exam, in our case the MAPC oral exam keyed to the MAPC reading list.

Today, we begin our discussions by focusing on a central programmatic issue for all technical communication programs, raised in an email sent by a new colleague, Sean Williams:

> I had two students in my office this week trying to figure out just what on earth social construction has to do with writing a memo and why they need to know Cicero to write a good proposal. "Just give me the format, Dr. Williams, and I'll write it," they say in not so many words. I think this is a huge curriculum issue, too, at the grad level because the perceived bifurcation (is that word too strong?) of the program begs the question of "fundamental" knowledge for proceeding in the program. Why aren't students required to take 490/690, "Technical Writing," but are required to take classical rhetoric? I don't mean to imply that they should be separated because I don't think they should be.

However, I'm not sure that we as a faculty are clear on exactly how the areas are connected, and the result is confused students and perhaps a confused faculty. We need, IMHO, to articulate, in writing, goals that unite the two threads in a mission statement or something like it because this type of focused attention on "What do we do?" necessarily precedes "How do we do it?" Revising the reading list is a "How do we do it?" consideration. And, not to be too self-aware, but would defining "what do we *do?*" be reflective instrumentalism?

In his recent *Collision Course: Conflict, Negotiation, and Learning in a College Classroom,* Russel Durst (1999) tracks the competing agendas of students and faculty in first-year composition studies classrooms. Like our MAPC students, Durst's composition students want practical help; like Durst's colleagues, we faculty want theory and critique as well. It's another version of the theory/practice divide, with faculty on one side, students on another, what Durst—and before him, Patrick Moore (1996, 1999), Carolyn Miller (1979, 1996) and Robert Johnson (1998a, 1999), among others (see Bridgeford 2002)—couches as a conflict between two impulses: on the one hand, students' "instrumentalism" and on the other, faculty theorizing.

Durst's (1999) curricular reply to this tension is what he calls "reflective instrumentalism," which, he says, "preserves the intellectual rigor and social analysis of current pedagogies without rejecting the pragmatism of most . . . students. Instead, the approach accepts students' pragmatic goals, offers to help them achieve their goals, but adds a reflective dimension that, while itself useful in the work world, also helps students place their individual aspirations in the larger context necessary for critical analysis" (178).

Which leads us to ask the following questions:

Would Durst's concept of reflective instrumentalism provide a useful way of framing our program in professional communication? If so, what changes to the program might it recommend?

Would other concepts already part of the culture of the program—such as "professionalism" or "reflective practice"—provide framings more congruent with the program? What changes might they recommend, particularly if they were made a more explicit or integral part of the program?

Are there other ways we might think about the program, especially about the relationship we seek to establish between rhetoric and technology?

How might we use these framings to develop a language to explain our expectations to students—and to ourselves?

In the pages that follow, we'll take up these questions as we narrate the process of revising the reading list for the MAPC. We'll approach this task as participant-observers of our program and our processes of curricular design. Additionally, in narrating the processes that we used in our curricular decisions, we'll explore the possibilities for representing these processes textually and our rationales for why we choose to represent them as we do. Our reading list is, of course, only one of many representations we could make of our process: other representations include MAPC recruiting materials, our MAPC handbook, and MAPC graduates themselves.

In conducting this study, then, we hoped to build an understanding of

1. the processes we used to review our program
2. the ways we represent that process textually in different rhetorical situations
3. a consideration of what those representations do to the process and our understanding of it

In other words, we want to consider a final reflective question: what does the means of representation suggest about the program itself, and how will it affect the very program under scrutiny?

Equally important, we hope that, in creating this reflective account of our revision process, we make a successful argument that other programs might also try such a collaborative revision themselves. Such curricular revision isn't often consciously observed or reported on, nor is it often theorized, yet (ironically) given its influence on students, it's critical. The key factor, as we found, is to *work together*. In other words, we chose not to assign this task to a subgroup of a larger committee or to a special task force, but to take it up as a committee of the whole. We knew in proceeding this way that the process would take more time, would be more cumbersome, would require considerable negotiating skills. We understood that, vested as we all are in what we think is important, we were taking a risk, that negotiations could break down, even fail. At the same time, we found, and we think others will as well, that both process (articulating together our goals for the program and ways these are realized in a set of readings) and product (the revised list) are worth the risk and effort.

We have many ways to narrate the story of our process, all of which comment differently on the values of the program itself. We could simply record it, for instance, by noting that we began work on the reading list in the fall and concluded in the spring. We met weekly, some of us

routinely, others as time and other responsibilities permitted—as we taught classes, wrote papers, attended conferences, recruited new faculty, developed a new undergraduate Writing and Publication Studies major. Representing the process this way indicates that *major curricular issues are a matter of course for the committee of the whole,* responsibilities that we took up seriously. That itself is both claim and statement about the program.

We could also tell our story through numbers. We began with twelve categories, including among them topics that were identical with our five core courses: Visual Rhetoric; Workplace Communication; Classical Rhetoric; Introduction to Professional Writing; and Research Methods in Professional Communication. Included as well were other categories that seemed to play a role in the program, although the role wasn't always clear: Literacy, Technology, International Communication. We began with forty-four items and were committed to maintaining that number, to resisting the impulse to grow the list. To accommodate the impulse, yet stay close to our target number of items, we created an archival list of all the items that could be included and worked from those. We also spoke as though all the categories were equal, although as individuals we had preferences, and it wasn't difficult to discern what those were. Given the number of items and the number of categories, each category—from Classical Rhetoric to International Communication—seemed eligible for about four entries. Representing the process this way would indicate that we value a certain conservative structure, that we like to explore the possibility of expanding our reach, but that at the end of the day we like to come home to the familiar, where everything has its place.

We could also tell our story through understandings, specifically our understandings about the process we should use for revision. Some of us thought that we should use the old list as a point of departure and should proceed by revising this list, understanding that to add a new text, we had to drop an old one. Some of us thought we should work from a blank slate to build a new list. Some of us thought we should focus on certain underrepresented areas—technology and diversity among them. Some of us felt passionately about our favorite figures and texts and thought that others should see the list through our theoretical lenses. And when passions were strong, we used our communication symbol—a "Fight Club" button, a promotional pin from Brad Pitt's

movie by the same name popular at the time—to signal that an individual had become overly invested in their personal preferences. The "Fight" button—which even now is seen by some as sign of negotiation, by others as sign of friction—became a part of the process, a material token of the work to which we are all committed.

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We are choosing, however, to tell our story *primarily* through our individual voices, in part because this individualism is ultimately what we value in the MAPC program and hope to teach students: a respect for a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, personalities, and passions. In part, we hope, through this way of telling the story, to work in *palimpsest* (de Certeau 1984; Barton and Barton 1993), to include in our collective story here traces and vestiges of how it came to be. In other words, the new reading list itself is one map to the program. But how that map was created can itself be mapped, and that too is our aim.

Our listserv makes such a representation possible. Listen in as we enter *in medias res* to Mark Charney, the chair of MAPC, summarizing the review of one meeting:

> Dear Kathleen (and MAPC Committee): Here are the best notes I can muster up from the meeting you missed. Please forgive me if I've misrepresented anyone! We discussed primarily visual communication, and plan next week to discuss professional communication theory, ideology, and teaching/pedagogy, so please, MAPCers, come to the meeting with good notes about what you want to do with each of the next three fields.
>
> Sean began the meeting not only with great ideas about vis comm, but also samples and examples of each of the following.
>
> 1. Jacqueline Glasgow's "Teaching Visual Literacy for the 21st century" for its emphasis on decoding images, making passive observers active, and its explanation of semiotics.
> 2. Williams and Harkus's "Editing Visual Media" for its emphasis on the verbal vs. the visual, especially its practical bent (and the good example of a ball vs. a basketball, etc.)
> 3. A PRIMER OF VISUAL LITERACY, Chapters Two and Three: one offers guidelines for visual literacy, a good overview, and the other, basic elements of visual communication.
> 4. Edward R. Tufte's new chapter 2 in VISUAL EXPLANATIONS, and chapters 4 and 5 in the old book to keep terms like Chat Junk, etc.

5. DESIGNING VISUAL LANGUAGE by Kostelnick and Roberts, especially chapters 1 and 2 which tie rhetoric to visual.

Now here is where I break down in terms of who suggested what. Both Tharon and Chris had a say here, and all three agreed, as did the rest of the committee there, about the worth of the [texts] below. It wasn't a fight club situation at all, and we got through this in record time, so much so that it surprised us into being unprepared to move on, so we adjourned early! (well, ok, only a few minutes early)

6. Kress and Van Leduwen's READING IMAGES, Chapters 2 and 3 about narrative theory and visual communication, especially the linguistics of visual design. Also, possibly chapter 4 which deals with modality.
7. Karen Schriver's DYNAMICS IN DOCUMENT DESIGN, pages 168–181 (this was Tharon's I remember), which deals somewhat with usability studies and technical brochures.
8. Carl mentioned a new book by Kenneth Hager with one chapter on Visual Communication. He plans to give us the exact reference next week.
9. Sean encouraged us to keep the Elizabeth Keyes already on the list, while everyone finally agreed to keep everyone already there, especially Barton and Barton, who everyone agreed was a clear introduction for uninitiated students, and Maitra/Goswami, the Kostelnick on the list, etc.
10. Also, EDITING: THE DESIGN OF RHETORIC, the final chapter about typesetting and production, was mentioned as something that may help basic students. By Sam DRAGGA and GWENDOLYN GONG.

Some discussion ensued about how this was often the first class most students took and how it has to begin very basically. The Hilligoss book was mentioned by Barbara Heifferon, who uses it successfully in the classroom, but using it would break our rule not to use our own texts in the classroom.

Finally, we agreed to make two lists—one the reading list for orals, and the other, a list of all of these related texts, each significant to students in the field and to students researching theses and projects. Such a list could be updated every year for the orientation MAPC book, making that list a current one from which we could update the orals list anytime we wanted.

I apologize if this is rough, or if I've given credit to anyone for something he or she may not want! See you next, and every Monday . . .

Mark Charney

Sometimes discussions that seemed to be about one issue—the one previously mentioned about visual rhetoric, for instance—turned out to

be about others; and always in the background was the question: *Who is the MAPC student?*

> It would be almost impossible to define the ideal student.
>
> Beth Daniell

> I agree. What I'm driving at in using this term is actually something like "what should every MAPC student leave the program with?" I'm not thinking here in terms of discursively forming ideal students, but rather of a minimum set of qualifications and knowledge that all students should possess, much like the list that you offered: theory, practice and technical expertise. The tricky part is figuring out what "theory," what "practice," and what "expertise" we're talking about. Is theory rhetorical theory or is it professional communication theory? They're related certainly, but not by any means the same. Is practice, writing seminar papers or creating multimedia? Again, they're related, but not the same. Is expertise a theoretical expertise or knowing how to use computers well?
>
> The separations are a matter of emphasis and it seems to me that this emphasis needs to be fleshed out a little more by having conversations like that we had today. It was EXTREMELY helpful in helping me to understand the way the people in this program view what the program does. Now that I have a little more context on "what it is that we do" I can make more informed choices about what to include/exclude from the reading list.
>
> Sean Williams

Who is the MAPC student? This question haunted the process, as we understood our role in defining and constructing that figure. Still the student, as Beth Daniell suggests, eludes us.

> Continuing to beat this poor horse, I don't think we can always be more specific. I want students to have some sense of technology. What does that mean? I don't think it means everyone has to design Web sites. I think a lot of it is what the student wants it to mean. They are agents in this process, not empty containers. While I understand your need for definition, I have been teaching way too long to think that my categories or yours are adequate to cover all the students. We set up the framework in which individuals and teachers work. The outcome is not up to us. I'm constantly amazed at what my students come up with—and like you, they often complain that I am not being clear enough.
>
> Beth Daniell

At some point, our negotiations on *who is the MAPC student* turned from abstract to particularized as we began to horse-trade—"I'll trade you a Landow for a Plato"—to represent what we thought every MAPC student should know. To accomplish this, we all forwarded nominations for each category, not to select winners, but to show patterns. We called them *tallies.* (Language matters.) It wasn't a flawless process, and it provided a set of questions that continue to beguile us.

How to negotiate?

As implied previously, having a written record helps; here Kathleen Yancey provides context for understanding the tallies.

Draft of Nominations for Reading List for MAPC

Context: Not everyone sent in tallies. Not everyone voted for three per category, so I just counted the number up to three. Not everyone sent only three per category, so I just counted the first three. If you numbered them, I took the top three.

A couple of suggestions appeared that had not been mentioned or discussed previously. I did not include them on the list.

Issues: Presence?

Absence?

The categories: do we need all of them? Two folks mentioned that they would dispense with teaching, one that we could dispense with literacies.

Should all categories be equally weighted?

What's the role of the current list?

How do these items compare to what's on the current list?

Some items are repeated—Faigley and Barton and Barton—come to mind.

Can we cross-reference some items?

Is diversity sufficiently represented?

Is technology sufficiently represented?

When we look at the list, what student have we constructed?

In the background, as we sorted through the tallies, discussions related to our questions continued. A major discussion involved the relationship of rhetoric to professional communication, as Martin Jacobi explains:

I guess I'm wondering still what constitutes "rhetoric" for you. I'm hoping it's not something like "bombastic discourse having no relation to the real world,

to what professional writers—whoever they may be—do for a living." I'm try-ing to imagine the nature of "professional documents outside the frame of rhetoric" but I'm coming up empty. When Ornatowski talks about the engi-neer who has to write a report that will sell to potential customers an engine that will not start in cold weather, he talks about the rhetorical choices—and ethical choices (since any action, as opposed to motion, is necessarily ethical invested)—that the engineer is making. It's clearly a rhetorical document that Ornatowski's engineer is talking about.

I would agree that reading Aristotle is not the most effective way of teach-ing or learning ethics, but what's your point? If you're saying that pro com uses case studies and not theory to do things, then aren't you contradicting your earlier claim that pro com is theoretically sophisticated? Aristotle pointed out that he wrote his Art o' Rhetoric because teachers of rhetoric were only using something like case studies for their students.

Sometimes in the middle of all this discussion would arrive a listserv post from somebody outside our dialogue that reminded us that we were hardly alone in sorting out these issues:

Last spring in *Time* or *Newsweek* there was a big article on Careers[,] and Technical Writing was featured heavily as a good bet for college students. We used it to help us bolster our argument for an interdisciplinary graduate cer-tificate in professional writing.

Irene Ward, from WPA-L (listserv)

The horse trading continued. It was smart; it was social; it was (of course) rhetorical. We made connections between other professional contexts and this one; we used such comparisons to think about what would best help students.

I'm thinking ahead to our next meeting and urging everyone come with a text or two to "be flexible" on. I think we are good enough horse traders to do this? Our task is not as daunting as it may seem. I counted 54 texts, and if we get down to 45 (shoot for less and see how that goes), that's only 9 to give up. I came up with that number because we are doing fewer chapters in Latour and Woolgar (e.g.) and others.

I'm also reading for absences. As peer reviewer for *TCQ* . . . I've reviewed a number of tech comm pieces. . . . My reviews have included some alarm about lack of awareness of something other than our good ol Yanqui point of view (I realize how strange this sounds in S[outh] C[arolina]). When I get the reviews back with other reviewers' comments as well, they are picking up on

the same thing. All this to say that I'm concerned that we may not yet represent a voice of someone other than ourselves for the good of our students who will go out and work in a world that, surprise, does not look exactly like us. Thus we need at least Freire on board or someone that makes this point. There may be a better rep. I'm open. Unless I missed something on the list, I don't see us doing this.

I wouldn't mind trading a Doheny-Farina and Harraway for a chapter from Harding that addresses a couple of absences. The one that covers standpoint theory (also one of Tharon's lenses in his book) might serve. It's at home, I'll send the chapter # later. Harraway is so dense, though God(dess) knows I love her, she makes Vitanza read like a Sunday school picnic (most likely an abominable mixed metaphor).

Barbara Heifferon

Trading itself, of course, isn't an easy process. We understood our choices as signs, as representations. We read multiple gestalts into such a list, as Chris Boese self-referentially suggests:

Chris won't give up Harraway. And Chris wants Freire. Classic struggle with canons. You know what it is. For new points of view to come in, something sacred has to go.

I'm not trying to be intransigent here, but I have a different point of view on the list. The old list is dangerously deficient in the area of technology. Quite a bit needs to go in there to bring it up to speed with what is going on in the world. I am as much of a horsetrader as anyone, but I don't think technology should be the thing that has to "give" as much as other areas do. Of course reasonable people may disagree. But if serious room for technological issues and technology criticism isn't made on the list, I believe there will be major credibility problems with it.

Other areas have long held place on the list. Like Rhetorical Theory. They are the 900 pound gorillas. Technology scholarship is newer and having great impact in the field, changing the landscape of the field even as we speak. If our list doesn't make room for it, it won't be because tech is a yearling gorilla, it will be because those of us who advocate for it haven't done a good enough job in making the case. The field is changing, with or without us. We just have to decide if we want our list to actually reflect that change.

In the end, as Barbara Heifferon's concluding post attests, the process worked—

I wanted to tell you the good news in case no one else had. . . . At MAPC today, after a meeting that lasted under an hour, we went from a reading list

of 62 down to 46!! Trades were made and collegiality remained intact after a
few vigorous conversations. . . . I think it's a great list. I took notes as did Mark,
and someone will get the final list ready for fall!! We did cheat a bit (folding
a few readings of same authors together, just a couple)

—if by "worked" we mean that we had a new list that most of us would
agree was better and that we had negotiated well. The list: it's append-
ed. It's not perfect. But *most* of us would agree, on *most* days, that it's bet-
ter. And it's different: some eleven items are new. Some of our
favorites—from Harraway to Bakhtin—didn't make it. But they are on
the archival list, and they are available for another (negotiating) day.
And although second-year graduate students have been given the tran-
sitional option of using the old or new list, the new students are using
this list, and we are finding it a better fit for most of the core courses. As
Sean Williams, Barbara Heifferon, and Kathleen Yancey (2000) put it at
CPTSC 2000, "Students who have seen the new list make positive com-
ments about it because the list manages to bring what seem to be oppo-
site poles—reflection and instrumentalism—into a single reading list
that represents the current state of our discipline." (See
http://www.cptsc.org/conferences/conference2000/Williams.html.)

• • •

We began this chapter, as we began the revision of the list, with an
interest in bringing theory and practice together. The new list doesn't
completely resolve this divide because we ourselves are still resolving it;
probably we should have understood that it's too large and too complex
a divide for this single curricular practice to resolve. But we have seen
that we can negotiate: we can compose a list that constructs a student
we'd like to see develop within our program and whose development is
fostered by our new reading list. The program, in other words, is dynam-
ic: it is able to accommodate both change and the tensions accompany-
ing such change.

As Bernadette Longo puts it,

Now that we've gone through one iteration of this process for revising the
MAPC reading list, it seems that we've played out the issue that motivated this
revision in the first place: "the perceived bifurcation . . . of the program"
between theory and practice. We entered this process on high theoretical
ground, positing topics that should be included in a reading list that reflected
the important conversations in our field. (Actually, I'm not sure we agree on
what our field is, but that's another chapter.) We all put forward readings in

these categories based on theories and philosophical points of view informing our own research and teaching. But as weeks went by and the discussions ground on, it seemed that we slipped unnoticed into the arena of practicalities as the size of the list and the pressures of compromise constrained us. By the end of the year, many of our discussions were shaped by the need to keep the list at about 44 items and also to include representative works from all 12 of our original topic areas. . . .

The intent of revising the list was theoretical, but the revision process turns out to be mostly practical. Once again, questions of "how do we do it" seemed to overwhelm questions of "what do we do." As Sean has mentioned in postrevision discussions, I'm not sure we have a handle yet on the question of what we do (as a program) when we shape our MAPC students' graduate studies. I think we have come up with a more current reading list through this process, and that's good. I'm not convinced, though, that we have better articulated the intent and objectives of our graduate program. Maybe that discussion needs to take place separately from the reading list revision process.

Which, of course, it has, through our later discussions—on exams, on projects and theses, on discussions about the kinds of experiences we hope to offer students.

Ultimately, that we didn't resolve the theory/practice split, or that Durst's (1999) construct didn't inform the entire process, or that we all feel there are still some gaps in the list doesn't matter as much as it may appear: this is not an exercise in Katz's (1992) expediency. What ultimately matters is that in the processes of (1) renegotiating our reading list and (2) negotiating the way we have chosen to represent it here, we discovered that we can practice what we preach to students: that successful communication, even involving the creation of reading lists, requires recognition and negotiation among many competing voices. In Durstian terms, we have had it both ways: in instrumental terms, we both accomplished the task and continued to reflect on the list, on the program, on the processes informing it, and on ways to weave together theory and practice into a coherent curricular whole.

In thinking about how and why such a process might be useful for others, we'd observe

- that participating in such a curricular revision can be a significant socializing activity, certainly for new faculty members, but also for more senior faculty as they interact with their new colleagues and with the possibilities for curricular revision;

- that it provides all faculty with a chance to examine how the field—and even the definition of the field—has changed since the last list was constructed;
- that engaging all program faculty in developing and maintaining a graduate program seems to require the kind of commitment realized in curricular negotiations and that these negotiations may entail friction and require delicacy and humor;
- that after having participated in this process, faculty understand the rationale explaining why individual readings are on the list as well as how the readings relate to each other, and they therefore are more inclined to see the list as a total package (rather than a set of disparate readings) and can explain this to students;
- that a reading list is just that, only a list; in a healthy curriculum, any list is necessarily and always penultimate given its contextualization within many other readings and experiences and the fact that it too will be revised;
- that the value of the list is likewise never fully understood until it is used by students and faculty together; and
- that what we have outlined here—by specific observations and linguistic montage—is a process, one more difficult and less efficient than if we had tasked it to a smaller group, but one more rhetorically productive. We created an opportunity to bring people together to communicate about things that matter: to write the program representing us and constructing students.

In short, we modeled for students the ways we'd like them to behave. The best we could do for students is to maintain a vestige of this idea in the reading list—and we did. We think this, too, may be one of the benefits of a collaborative curricular design.

THE READING LIST

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