Introducing Students to Disciplinary Genres: The Role of the General Composition Course

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Recent discussions of disciplinary writing have addressed the possibility that disciplinary genres cannot be taught. In particular, they have considered the proposition that if we understand disciplinary writing as a product of situated cognition, then it cannot be taught effectively by English faculty as part of a composition curriculum. David Russell, drawing on Vygotsky and Dewey, has argued this point forcefully:

> [Because writing is] a matter of learning to participate in some historically situated human activity that requires some kind(s) of writing, it cannot be leamed apart from the problems, the habits, the activities-the subject matter---of some group that found the need to write in that way to solve a problem or carry on its activities. (194)

Russell recognizes that one logical consequence of this way of understanding writing might be "to drop the abstraction (and perhaps the institution) of general composition courses in higher education" (195).

Furthermore, it may be the case that even within the disciplines, skill in writing can be learned (as one component of apprenticeship) but not taught. Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin have observed that "generally the enculturation into the practices of disciplinary communities is 'picked up' in the local milieu of the culture rather than being explicitly taught" (485-M). They focus attention on the question of when this initiation into disciplinary practices actually occurs, suggesting that what undergraduate students acquire are pedagogical genres rather than disciplinary discourse models. In other words, most undergraduate students acquire transitional genres which share some of

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the features of disciplinary writing but are situated in classroom contexts. For this reason, Berkenkotter and Huckin argue that it may not be reasonable to expect undergraduates to acquire true disciplinary style and that modified teaching objectives may be more valid at the baccalaureate level. In support of this view, they suggest that writing-across-the-curriculum activities might reinforce the idea that classroom genres should not be assessed according to the standards for disciplinary genres (488).

Aviva Freedman raises the possibility that explicit teaching of disciplinary genres may be not only ineffective but even harmful. She argues that at best it may have little effect on students' development of the tacit knowledge needed to practice disciplinary writing. On the other hand, explicit teaching may lead students to overgeneralize rules which only partially encode the rhetorical practices of a discipline, and particularly when presented by writing specialists rather than faculty in the disciplines, may cause students to attend to the wrong things and thereby actually impede the process of enculturation (234-s).

We believe, with Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb, that explicit teaching is beneficial, and we argue that it is particularly so for undergraduates, who are just at the thresholds of their disciplines. Most undergraduate writers lack contextualized knowledge of the disciplines to which they are being introduced. For them, the generative potential of disciplinary forms is especially important: When students try to practice the linguistic features of disciplinary genres, they must seek at the same time the kinds of substantive information those genres convey. As Williams and Colomb propose, even students who are not fully socialized are "compelled to focus on, perhaps even to generate, the knowledge for those generic moves" (262).

We suggest that in the process of introducing students to disciplinary genres, the roles of faculty in composition and faculty in the disciplines are distinct but complementary. English faculty can prepare the ground for acquisition of disciplinary style-which typically takes place gradually throughout the period of undergraduate and graduate study. Explicit teaching of writing by faculty within the disciplines can further ease the task undergraduates face as they move toward mastery. Our position rests on two fundamental propositions. First, even if "all" that general composition courses can accomplish is to introduce students to formal differences in the writing characteristic of different disciplines, that introduction is nevertheless a crucial stage in their acquisition of disciplinary style. Noticing the surface features of a

disciplinary genre is not a trivial matter, but a subtle and extremely important one. Second, a focus on the acquisition of disciplinary style is desirable at the undergraduate level because of its pedagogical role in fostering students' enculturation into their chosen fields. Truly mastering a disciplinary style means mastering the reasoning, the conventions, and the epistemological assumptions of the relevant discourse community; because completion of the undergraduate major is typically the first stage in mastery of the discipline, it makes sense to incorporate explicit attention to writing at that level.

The Role of English Faculty

English faculty are in the best position to introduce students to the concepts of discourse communities and disciplinary style. Samples of writing across different disciplines can be used to illustrate to beginning college students how writing varies with the setting. This fact is an important discovery for students and becomes itself a conceptual tool to assist them in dealing with the varied writing assignments encountered during their lives. Unless they become academics, students are unlikely to practice in their careers the kind of writing they produce in college courses. But they will have to adapt to patterns in the form and style of writing in their professional settings. Job promotions, career changes, and avocational pursuits can all move individuals into new discourse communities and present them with writing challenges that cannot be anticipated by formal instruction. A successful introduction to disciplinary styles prepares students to attend to the writing demands of new situations and thus speeds their enculturation into new communities.

The undergraduate curriculum itself presents many writing challenges. Variations in academic writing are more numerous and more fundamental than we once perceived. Charles Bazerman has shown that what counts as knowledge differs across disciplines and that disciplinary writing styles have grown out of varying conceptions of what and how we know. Susan Peck MacDonald's work has extended that insight; she has identified systematic differences at the sentence level, demonstrating not only that disciplines privilege different kinds of information but also that those interests are reflected and reinforced in the syntax of the sentence. Disciplinary styles are not just frames or shells into which content can be cast, but habits of thought and communication grounded in the objectives, values, and "world view" of each discipline. To ignore these realities in a general composition course seems irresponsible. A decade ago, Elaine Maimon proposed

that with help from faculty in the disciplines English faculty could "'make explicit the tacit conventions of a variety of genres" (1 13). Similarly, Leslie E. Moore and Linda H. Peterson have suggested, "[I]f English faculty cannot bring a knowledge of the content and methodologies of various disciplines to the composition classroom, they can bring something else that is essential: an understanding of how conventions operate in a piece of written discourse" (466-67).

The General Composition Course

Composition courses can introduce students to ways in which writing produced in different disciplines can be expected to vary. Like most introductory courses, general composition courses should aim to survey material which will be developed more fully as students progress. One of the goals of Writing Across the Curriculum has been to counter the notion, in the minds of students and faculty alike, that a single composition course---or, more likely, a sequence of required courses-completes a program of instruction, that it prepares students to "go forth and write" without further formal instruction. The general composition sequence should inform students about the task that lies before them and prepare them to assimilate new genres (ideally with the help of explicit instruction from faculty in the disciplines).

Although academic writing is not monolithic, there are at least three categories of conventions which occur in all academic genres. Conventions of structure control the flow of the argument and, more importantly, determine the kinds of cues available to readers. Conventions of reference establish standard ways of addressing the work of other scholars; they encode the formal or public relationships among members of the discourse community. Finally, conventions of language guide phrasing at the sentence level: they reflect characteristic choices of syntax and diction. Undergraduates in the early stages of their academic careers-toward the end of their first semester and particularly during the second semester of a two-semester sequence-can understand the ways in which writing conventions reflect the values and serve the needs of specialized communities of writers, and they can begin to recognize patterns and variations in selected samples of academic texts.

<u>Conventions of Structure</u>

Students can learn to observe disciplinary patterns in the ways academic writing is structured. Although there is, as Freedman notes, danger in overgeneralization, it is valuable for students to know that

there are certain rhetorical moves which are familiar and accepted within particular discourse communities. In empirical reports, it is conventional for detailed presentation of data to precede discussion of the conclusion to be drawn from them. In a literary essay, on the other hand, presentation of the author's central insight (the conclusion or endpoint of reasoning) typically comes much earlier and is followed by detailed discussion of supporting data. Handbooks for freshman composition courses generally offer students a menu of devices for the opening sentence or opening paragraph of an essay. It is important for students to know that particular options are more appropriate to one discipline than another. For example, opening a literary essay with an anecdote or a play on words or a quotation may be a sign of sophistication, but opening an empirical report in the same way would be extremely unconventional and would mark the writer as an outsider.

All academic writing exhibits patterns that Peter Elbow has called "conventions of explicitness"- that is, every mode of academic writing has ways of announcing its own structure and directing attention to its main points. "Even though there is a wide range of custom as to the degree of signposting in different academic discourses, signposting is probably the most general or common textual convention of academic discourse" (Elbow 144). For example, academic writing typically provides some sort of preview of its own objectives at or near the beginning of an article. In the humanities, as Elbow points out, it is particularly conventional to articulate the thesis near the start of an essay; the stress in many composition texts on announcing the thesis explicitly and early reflects the practice of their authors. The statement of thesis may be accompanied by even more detailed previewing: a listing of the principal stages in the development of the argument. In addition, academic writing in the humanities tends to be particularly attentive to signposting in the form of explicit sentence-level transitions, as well as mini-introductions and conclusions as the argument proceeds: here's where we've been and here's where we're going; thus . . .next. The use of headings and subheadings to announce subsections of the essay is optional but less common, certainly not required by convention.

The early introduction of an explicit thesis is by far the most common way of announcing in advance the point an essay will make. But in the humanities, another familiar strategy to cue readers to the writer's interests and strategies is the use of an epigraph. From the perspective of enculturated readers, epigraphs offer an especially el-

egant way of previewing because they accomplish more than one task: a well-chosen quotation both reveals and conceals, guides readers and challenges them; at the same time it often serves to establish the writer's scholarly credentials.

Writing in the natural and social sciences offers a preview of significant content, but not always by means of an explicit thesis statement early in the article. By convention, scholarly articles in these disciplines are preceded by an abstract or initial summary; before they begin the text of an article, readers have considerable insight concerning where it is going and how it expects to get there. Sometimes there is a true thesis statement near the end of the introduction, but more often what is stated in the introduction is a hypothesis, which focuses the issue yet preserves the possibility that the outcome may be unexpected.

Another convention of explicitness in the natural and social sciences is the nearly universal use of headings and subheadings to divide the text and announce its content. In empirical reports, the labeling and sequence of the major subsections are prescribed: introduction, methods, results, discussion. The specificity and universality of the convention are not trivial matters. These headings, in the order specified, signal not only the content or objective of each section, but the writer's commitment to one of the fundamental values underlying the empirical disciplines: the importance of shared, replicated methodology. Practitioners have long recognized that the genre of the empirical report is not so much a record of the actual process of thinking and doing as it is a rhetorical strategy for imposing a particular kind of order on experience (Gross, "Does" 437-39). By presenting their work in the conventional structure, with the customary signposting, researchers make the messiness of ordinary experience-which is more recursive, less linear, less neat than the model-conform to the ideal of the empirical method. Noticing and imitating this kind of rhetorical restructuring contributes to students' development of the values of the discipline.

Conventions of Reference

All academic discourse requires attention to the work of other scholars; the way references to other writers and texts are managed is governed by disciplinary conventions. These patterns encode differences in the ways disciplines conceive the nature and purpose of intertextual dialogue.

Strategic Use of Citations. The incorporation of citations in a scholarly text accomplishes a variety of different purposes, as John M.

Swales has observed (6-7). First, writers need to establish their credentials as masters of the literature in the field. Second, they display strategic judgment in their choices from among a range of possible citations. It may be prudent or even necessary for publication to establish professional alignments by including certain citations. For academic writers, the choice of citations becomes a subtle argument for the centrality or prominence of particular sources; texts and writers that are cited frequently acquire status, while citation of new or less familiar work can bring it wider notice. Finally, writers use citation and discussion of particular sources as a means to establish the focus and stance of the present text. The relative importance of these rhetorical objectives varies by discipline.

In empirical reports, for example, selecting references effectively and incorporating them in the right places is more important than discussing them. Listing citations without detailed discussion of the work referenced is accepted practice. Merely naming the source serves as a subtle and highly condensed form of communication with other members of the discourse community. Indeed, it may be difficult for an uninitiated reader to tell from the context exactly what the publication cited is about or how it relates to the work under discussion. The function of the reference is not to say anything substantive about the work cited, but to encode other kinds of communicationbetween writer and readers. At first, it may seem to students that being allowed to drop names is easier than extended discussion; they do not appreciate the importance of citing the right sources. It is true that English faculty won't know the relevant sources for other disciplines, but they can alert students to some possible missteps-for example, the risks in citing a source outside the particular target discourse community.

In other disciplines (for example, philosophy or literary criticism) a long string of unexamined citations is less common and likely to seem superficial, the strategy of a novice rather than an initiate. In the humanities, analysis (rather than identification) of previous work is often used strategically to anchor adiscussion. One of the most common ways for writers to put an issue on the table is to select a particular precursor for extended discussion, focusing on points of convergence as well as points where the present text will diverge. While it is still true that the subtleties of the argument are inaccessible to an outsider or a neophyte, the conventional treatment of sources is obviously less telegraphic and more discursive.

Quotation. In many freshman composition courses, considerable attention is paid to the mechanics of incorporating references to source material within a new text. Typically, students are expected to learn the phrasing and punctuation of direct and indirect quotation, the uses of block quotations as well as shorter quotations incorporated within paragraphs or sentences. In addition, students are taught to avoid dropping quotations or citations of sources into the text without analysis or discussion.

In fact, however, the use of frequent or extended quotation is a discipline-specific feature, more characteristic of the humanities than the sciences. A glance at the pages of a journal publishing literary criticism is likely to reveal quotations on every page; in journals publishing articles on cognitive psychology or archeology, quotations are quite rare. In such disciplines, students are expected to do extensive research and to master literature relevant to the problem they are addressing, but they are likely to lose points if they include the exact language of the original. Even a crucial insight, distinctively phrased, is more often paraphrased than quoted; block quotations are almost unknown.

A reliance on direct quotation is natural and essential in a discipline like literary criticism where the objects of study are texts. However, the habit of direct quotation is so common in the humanities and so uncommon in the empirical sciences that it seems to coincide, in practice if not in origin, with other differences in the relationships among members of a discourse community and the uses writers make of each other's work. In the humanities, the writer often defines a position by distinguishing it from that of others. New learning is as likely to result from revisiting old territory as from actually breaking "new" ground. Advances in understanding an issue or a text can be conceived as "thickening," elaborating, making more complex. Although literary scholars would be likely to agree that the "truth" toward which the discipline proceeds is multi-layered and encompasses a variety of different, often conflicting, contributions, the way an individual scholar presents a contribution is often by disputing or displacing work that has gone before. There is nothing particularly disturbing about standing apart or presenting work that represents a radical departure from the prevailing norms-perhaps a startlingly new reading of a literary text, Enterprises like literary criticism, philosophy, and history need revisionist thinking. The enabling fiction which justifies

new contributions may be that previous work has been "wrong," "blind," or inadequate in a significant way.

Progress in the empirical disciplines, on the other hand, depends upon the cumulative, collaborative nature of the scientific enterprise. As Kuhn implies, the most common and perhaps overall the **most** satisfying kind of contribution is to add a brick to the wall without displacing parts of the wall that are already in place. Obviously, identification of a fundamental flaw or instability requires radical rebuilding, but tearing down the wall and starting over sets everybody back. Researchers who produce completely anomalous findings are likely, initially at least, to be distressed and to be concerned about the validity of their own work. While relationships among members of scientific communities are no less hierarchical and no less competitive than those of other intellectual communities, the governing myth is one of disinterested cooperation.

The habit of avoiding direct quotation is useful to this community in two ways. First the practice of rephrasing minimizes explicit attention to the language in which ideas are expressed and contributes to what George Dillon has called "the rhetoric of objectivity." In theory, it is the core of the insight or observation which is available for restatement. Second, the convention of condensing and paraphrasing rather than quoting directly diminishes the need for public dispute or for the kind of clarification that sometimes seems quibbling. The narrow but inevitable distance between a statement and its paraphrase creates a useful space for redirecting language in ways that support new work. Although writers are expected to guard against actual distortion of another's point, a certain amount of accommodation is the norm.

Thus a relatively superficial difference in the texts produced in different disciplines, observable on the page, pointed out to students and imitated by them, suggests a crucial distinction in the assumptions of different disciplines about knowledge and knowledge-making. Dispensing with direct quotation assumes that ideas are separable from the language in which they are expressed. Conversely, heavy emphasis on direct quotation, particularly when quotation is accompanied by extensive explication, assumes that language and meaning are inextricable.

Conventions of Language

Preparing students to assimilate the conventions of language they will encounter in their disciplines is the most demanding and dangerous portion of a general composition course which addresses disciplinary

genres. Useful information associated with conventions of structure and reference can be communicated to students as concrete examples and suggestions for practice. Students at an introductory level can examine texts to determine whether a discourse community typically uses--or doesn't use--quotations. They can be guided in observing the different functions references perform in disciplinary texts They can compose texts which imitate the way typical written works in the discipline are organized. But with respect to the nuances of language, this approach is more difficult-for several fundamental reasons, not the least of which may be the inability of the typical English instructor t.o recognize and articulate such features.

Although analysis of disciplinary genres has been conducted largely by specialists incomposition (forthemost part faculty in English Departments), the insight it has produced forces us to question whether English faculty are qualified to teach the language of academic writing in other disciplines. Composition instructors typically have little or no experience writing outside their own fields, In many colleges and universities, composition is taught by people steeped in the traditional English curriculum who have a sketchy understanding of and no admiration for the writing produced in other fields. Lester Faigley and Kristine Hansen observe that "the conventional four-part organization of a psychology report specified in the APA Style Sheet embodies a world view about how knowledge can be verified, a world view that few English teachers share or are willing to assimilate" (148). Many English faculty give students and colleagues the impression that they regard writing in other disciplines as pedestrian at best, because features they associate with fine writing (vivid metaphors, perhaps, or active verbs) are missing. On the other hand unfamiliar rhetorical moves may not be valued or even recognized. People who have never written lab reports or case studies cannot appreciate the way fully enculturated writers communicate with one another--the way they use and "manipulate" conventions, the way a particular choice of language may encode a subtext evident to readers in the discourse community--let alone coach students to attempt such writing.

Further, an English teacher venturing into these waters risks offending colleagues in the disciplines whose writing styles are addressed. Even scholars specializing in composition or rhetoric often fail to perceive how often their characterizations of intentions and practices in other fields strike a false note. It is hard for English faculty to appreciate how annoying it may be for writers in empirical disciplines

to be told that they "manipulate conventions" when "manipulation" suggests not an appropriate and admirable mastery of the form but deviousness, deceit, or a lapse in the forthrightness valued in the discipline.

To be successful in preparing students to assimilate conventions of language, an English instructor must develop sensitivity to these issues and adopt conservative instructional objectives that can be reasonably achieved. He or she should not be placed in the role of "expert" in the nuances of language in other disciplines but rather should use appropriate examples to instill in students the basic principle that conventions of language differ among academic writing genres. We nominate three topics for use in making that point.

Language as a Medium or a Product. In some disciplines such as literary criticism, texts not only communicate, they are unabashed celebrations of language. Vivid metaphors, dramatic sentences, and self-conscious phrasing distinguish these works from writing in other disciplines where words are chosen to make language appear to be a transparent medium for expressing ideas. Writing in the natural and social sciences is an example of the latter, where diction and syntax work together to keep the reader's attention on the phenomenon under study, not the language used to describe it. Metaphors are not at all uncommon in empirical reports (where, for instance, measurements may be discussed in terms of "floor" or "ceiling" values), but they are likely to be conventional metaphors so familiar to enculturated readers that they do not call attention to themselves. Undergraduate students can learn to appreciate fundamental assumptions about language which underlie differences in disciplinary styles. A collection of carefully selected samples can prepare students to attend to the ways language is used in their disciplines and thus aid them in assimilating the style of their chosen fields.

Expressing Disagreement. Writers must sometimes disagree with others in their fields, and the ways in which disagreement is expressed differ dramatically among disciplines. This is another area where distinctive language patterns can be identified that are interesting to students and also serve to reinforce the idea that there are differences in language conventions among disciplines. In some fields such as literary criticism, disagreement may be sharply expressed. Another view may be described as "willful revisionism" (Bethea 232), or a colleague may be said to be "truculently persist[ing] in crediting the discredited" (Battersby 51). In the discipline of history, such assertive rhetoric is

rare; disagreement is gently handled or ignored. An alternative position is described as "too simple" (White 874). A historian with a different interpretation may be said to "take a sunnier view of the material" (Rogin 1076). In empirical disciplines such as psychology, disagreement is focused on the details of the empirical process and away from other writers as individuals. The generality of another's proposal may be challenged as Tenpenny and Shoben do in asserting that "... this [theoretical distinction] is not able to deal with an increasing number of results ..." (25), or methodology may be questioned as illustrated by Hirshman and Durante: "The primary criticism is that the threshold-setting procedures used in previous experiments are not adequate to ensure that. . ." (255).

These examples show different conceptions of etiquette in disagreeing with colleagues. Although the subtler nuances of such language conventions are beyond the scope of a general composition course, their basic forms and the issues they index can be presented by English faculty in a way that prepares undergraduates to be more thoughtful readers and writers in their disciplines,

The Language of Conviction. Handbooks used in composition courses often give students blanket advice to be direct and to avoid redundancy or "clutter" by eliminating qualifiers ("probably,"' 'maybe," "I think," "In my judgment,") and making assertions forthrightly. In particular, students are advised not to allow the use of such qualifiers to become a mannerism. Inliterary criticism, for example, it is understood that the writer is presenting his orherreading of the work and it is usually unnecessary to repeatedly emphasize the tentativeness of the enterprise. Within this disciplinary context, an appropriate degree of assertiveness conveys conviction.

In the conclusions of empirical reports, however, "hedged" wording-for example "tend," "suggest," "may," "it is probable that," "itis reasonable to conclude that"-serves an important function. Because empirical reports typically relate the data of the study to the discipline's current understanding of a recognized problem, the author is faced with a rhetorical task that requires a delicate balance. On the one hand the author must convince peers that the results have substantive implications, butontbeother, the conclusions must not appear to extend beyond the data. One indication of this rhetorical tightrope is the frequency with which hedged wording is used to discuss the conclusions of empirical studies. Hedged wording implicitly recognizes the uncertain flow of the ongoing stream of empirical studies investigating complex phenomena.

New findings can and do cause old conclusions to be abandoned. As Alan Gross has observed, the language is designed to convey the impression that theories are more tenuous and less permanent than the data that generate them, an idea that has characterized empirical disciplines since the time of Bacon (Rhetoric 69-74). By communicating proper respect for the empirical process, such wording has the rhetorical effect of making a hedged conclusion more convincing than a stronger claim.

The Role of Faculty in the Disciplines

We should begin by saying that the role of other faculty in improving the writing skills of their students is, and will remain, outside of the purview of the English department. We expect that these faculty will continue to employ a wide variety of strategies designed to improve the writing of their students. Nonetheless, the approach to discipline-specific writing proposed here would change the model of writing instruction current on most university campuses. Presently, most faculty view writing instruction as the responsibility and the expertise of faculty in the English department (even writing across the curriculum programs often involve "outreach" by members of the English department who participate directly in the instruction and assessment of writing in disciplines other than English). Many faculty would be surprised at the disciplinary differences identified by studies in composition; they share with some English faculty the assumption that good writing is readily identifiable and that good writing in one setting is good writing in another. As English courses move to explicitly prepare students to acquire disciplinary style, the operative model of writing in an academic setting is likely to evolve as well to one where faculty in the other disciplines feel responsibility to help their students master the relevant disciplinary style. We believe this will be the case, if for no other reason, because students primed in the ways we suggest here will be asking more focused questions that faculty in the disciplines will find interesting to address. Many of these faculty may come to accept the proposition that mastery of a discipline's writing style helps students acquire the discipline's style of thinking and problem solving. It is likely that disciplinary writing could become a more important pedagogical objective for these faculty than it is at present. We believe that such changes could revolutionize not only the composition course but also the general role of writing in college instruction. The effect may be an increase in experimentation with pedagogical approaches to disci-

plinary writing, carried out by individual faculty members in many disciplines. These innovations are likely to involve explicit teaching strategies in many varied forms. They will no doubt draw on existing guidebooks (such as Gelfand and Walker's *Mastering APA Style*) and also develop new directions. English faculty cannot expect to direct such efforts. But they can expect that studies in composition and rhetoric will be enriched by mutual. exchanges with colleagues in the disciplines.

Concluding Comments

Presently, students in composition classes are offered more models of writing in the humanities and more practice in producing that kind of writing than any other, The result is that much of what they learn in composition is not transferable to writing in their other classes, let alone to writing in their professions. We believe that this need not be the case. Students can learn the kinds of conventions that can be expected to change across discourse communities. They can practice the surface features of generic form--and can profit particularly from comparative exercises. For example, working from a set of readings, students can compose introductions for two different disciplinary genres, an assignment that requires them to attempt different rhetorical moves in their opening sentences, in references to source material, and in the establishment of focus, They can practice modifying an argument by using the language of conviction appropriate to different disciplinary genres. By careful selection of material and staging of assignments, the general composition course (particularly the second course in a two-course sequence) can prepare students to adapt to the discourse communities they will encounter later.

In examining the crucial issue of whether writing skills acquired in one context can be applied successfully in other situations, Michael Carter draws upon a fundamental distinction between general and local knowledge: general or abstract knowledge of writing should be applicable across different contexts, while local knowledge is context specific; he argues for the importance of both general and local knowledge in writing, with general knowledge particularly critical when writers approach unfamiliar writing tasks (269-71). Heretofore, composition specialists have typically assumed that examination of disciplinary writing relies upon local. knowledge and therefore is beyond the scope of the introductory composition course. The problem is that many of us have been offering local knowledge (the patterns of structure, reference,

and language characteristic of writing in the humanities) as general knowledge. In fact, however, the required composition course presents a unique opportunity to equip students with heuristically useful general knowledge about writing conventions in the disciplines.

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