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Access as a Participatory Design Principle: Grant Writers Moving from Securing

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Introduction

Grant writing is an exercise in precision rhetoric, tailored audience work that seeks to customize a rigid writing genre (e.g., Miner & Ball, 2019) to align the values and interests of nonprofits, funding agencies, and communities. Grant writing requires researching the best fit, defining problems, articulating thought-out solutions, and attending to community needs. It is storytelling in report-writing form (Clarke, 2009). But how can we help students view grant writing as more than a specialized rhetoric for requesting money? Students in my grant writing courses understand, on the surface, how grant writers act as advocates by securing funding for those who need access to resources. But how can we help students recognize their role as agents of change as grant writers (Jones, 2017), especially in working with social justice issues? This article highlights a form of power or influence grant writers have in facilitating access not only to resources but also access for citizens to be part of designing the spatial narratives that act as historical memory in their communities. I present a teaching case of my recent undergraduate grant writing course to explain this influence.

As a technical communicator, a grant writer's influence is tied to their intermediary role between funding organizations, nonprofits, and communities, which draws attention to how their work is tied up in issues of access and power. Scholarship in technical and professional communication has theorized this intermediary role, illustrating how technical communicators are knowledge workers who coordinate (e.g.,

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Slattery, 2007; Conklin, 2007) and direct content (Dubinsky, 2015), act as boundary spanners (e.g., Peng & Sutanto, 2012) to facilitate (e.g., Read and Swartz, 2015) knowledge creation, and advocate for oppressed groups (Jones, 2016). Building on the role of advocate, scholars have noted how technical communicators can enact socially responsible design (e.g., Rose, 2016). It is Kristen Moore's work specifically, however, that helps me explain what I call the technical communicator's role as an access mechanism. Moore illustrates how technical communicators doing public engagement work are not only facilitators but also participants and designers (Moore, 2017). I argue that helping students see themselves—as grant writers—as being both participants and designers offers them a methodology for helping citizens “participate in the shaping of the worlds in which they act” (Simonsen & Roberston, 2012, p. 4).

This report presents a case where students vocally resisted the class project because they felt the nonprofit's service via mobile app was not accessible. Students expressed concern that the app was not well advertised, was dismissive of non-smartphone users, and was too eclectic. This point of resistance opened the door to discussions of access and then discussions of what critical position grant writers play as access mechanisms in facilitating connections between project designers (usually nonprofits) and citizens to collaborate and co-design. While the students' concerns about access were justified, the broader social positioning of the nonprofit in our community project revealed how “open access” to nonprofit services was more complicated than simply gaining access to resources. The students moved from helping citizens make use of an app to providing underrepresented citizens a platform for rewriting the spatial narratives of Wilmington, NC. Existing historical markers and downtown Wilmington sites currently put forth a racist spatial narrative that misinforms and erases the calculated, state-wide hate crimes of white supremacists that spanned from the post-civil war period well into the twentieth century. In 1898, the democratic party spurred a coup with violent acts that amounted to a massacre of 14 black citizens – 14 documented and possibly as high as 60 (Umfleet, 2006, p. 1) – a major reduction in black voters, and a migration. Once students visited locations around the city that have clearly erased the event from history, they were committed.

For our class, access became a key ethic that helped identify layers of power that grant writers should be aware of in their training. After providing a brief overview of my course, I explain the nonprofit we worked with and provide a short history of the 1898 massacre. I then tell the story of the students' pushback, accompanied by their reflections and site visits. I close by considering the need to distinguish between UCD and PD approaches to grant writing.

Course Structure and Framework for Analyzing Reflections

The Grant Writing Course

My department's grant writing class was developed to appeal to both English and other majors. The class fulfills a professional genres course requirement in the Professional Writing English major track and the department's Certificate in Professional Writing. Outside of the major and certificate, students from other departments often enroll in the course. We see a presence from creative writing, political science, art, art history, psychology, environmental science, and other science departments. Though the course is broadly focused, it favors training in writing grants for nonprofits as many of our students intern or graduate and become employed by nonprofits in the area.

The Project

The nonprofit grant proposal was the last of three major assignments in the semester. The nonprofit project asked students to write LOIs, feasibility reports, a series of drafts, and a final grant we would send to the nonprofit Sites Set for Knowledge. To begin the semester, we discussed the possibility of working with Sites Set for Knowledge to address local representation of the 1898 events. The students expressed interest in this idea, but I left the option open for them to decide whether to work with this nonprofit or to find another.

The grant assignment included both collaborative and individual writing tasks. Each student was required to write and submit a full grant proposal individually, but the class collaborated in researching and assessing the proposal dependencies. Together, students made decisions on key rhetorical strategies, shared notes via OneDrive, and wrote group reports. For example, students wrote feasibility reports in three groups and voted on which funding agency best fit the nonprofit's goals. They also relied on one another through peer reviews as they drafted section by section. Over the summer I have been condensing the twelve grant proposals into one, which will be sent to our nonprofit partner, Sites Set for Knowledge. Completing this grant has highlighted the need for participatory community work, so this project is ongoing.

The Nonprofit

The nonprofit we chose to work with was Sites Set for Knowledge. The organization offers artists, performers, and historians a way to exhibit site-specific digital art through their smartphone application named Popwalk. This app displays digital artists' work—usually video and/or audio—on location, attached to specific and purposeful sites. The app uses geofencing technology, kind of like a Pokémon Go for artists, to display the artwork. Users must “unlock” (see Figure 1) the works by visiting the location. While services like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and other platforms can be viewed in any location, Popwalk restricts access to content based on location. It is this site-specificity that makes such an exhibition exciting. David Lindsay, the nonprofit director and creator of Popwalk, developed the platform because digital artists had no method for displaying truly site-specific artwork. Sites Set for Knowledge has hosted multiple exhibits worldwide, some in coordinated art exhibits with museums and art galleries (e.g., Granary Arts, n.d).

The Popwalk app builds on the long tradition of site-specific artwork, drawing inspiration from artists like Christo or Jeanne-Claude's site-specific environmental installations, such as the Running Fence in 1976. While site-specific work can enhance and praise the sites in which they are installed, the medium has equal potential to disrupt and draw attention to erased histories and silenced voices (Deutsche, 1996; Kwon, 2002), such as Mary Jane Jacob's (1991) *Places with a Past* exhibit at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC in the early 1990s. Jacob's exhibit used the city of Charleston as the backdrop for site-specific artists to draw attention to the city's problematic history with slavery.

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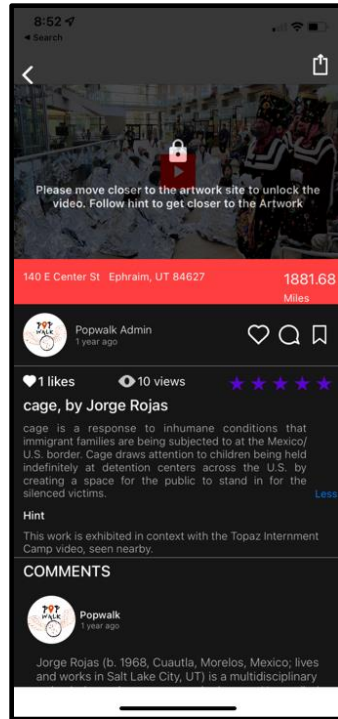


Figure 1: screenshot of Popwalk interface displaying “Cage” exhibit page.

An example of site-specific work on Popwalk is Jorge Rojas’s performance art titled “Cage.” Rojas’s description on Popwalk states, “cage is a response to inhumane conditions that immigrant families are being subjected to at the Mexico/U.S. boarder. Cage draws attention to children being held indefinitely at detention centers across the U.S. by creating a space for the public to stand in for the silenced victims.” Rojas’s video is a montage of video clips from congress and clips from performance art he directed. The video of congress shows presiding congresswoman Karen Handel in 2018 preventing Representative Ted Lieu from playing an audio recording as evidence of U.S. border agents forcing children from their parents at the Mexico/U.S. border. Juxtaposing these clips, Rojas includes selections of a performance he directed of Mexican Chinelos draping Mylar blankets over individuals sitting on the floor of the Salt Lake City public library (Figure 2), invoking a moment of silence for the families at the border. The video in and of itself is powerful and provocative. But Rojas intends viewers to watch the video while standing next to a student housing unit on Snow Colleague’s campus in Ephraim, UT. This building is a repurposed barrack from the Topaz Internment Camp from WWII. Through the combination of his artwork (the

video montage) and the site-specificity, Rojas invites viewers to connect racist, local past events and spaces to current day examples, also revealing a very in-the-moment example of how such histories are erased. The site-specificity encourages users to identify with past and present examples of racism and human brutality while at the same time acknowledging that the innocent-looking housing unit in front of them is yet another example, another layer, of such history.



Figure 2: screenshot of Rojas's "Cage" video

The 1898 Massacre

On November 10, 1898, an armed mob of "Red Shirts," soldiers, and armed citizens marched from an armory in downtown Wilmington toward the city's only black owned and operated newspaper, The Daily Record. By the time the mob had reached the press, as many as two thousand had joined the procession as the mass of armed white supremacists worked itself through the neighborhoods. They broke into, ransacked, and burned the building. Then, following a rumor of riots, the mob moved to the Cotton Compress on the other side of the city. At the sight of the mob and having seen smoke in the distance, black workers at the Compress feared and fled to move their families to safety (Umfleet, 2006, p. 132). The armed crowd followed. About ten blocks northeast from the compress, the first shots were fired, white supremacists killing at least three black men. At the sound of shots, white officials approved using two rapid-fire guns to establish order. Loaded in the back of a horse drawn wagon, a team of Wilmington Light Infantry soldiers and citizens crossed the Fourth Street Bridge and fired their machine gun, "killing as many as 25 black men" at 6th and

Brunswick (Umfleet, 2006, p. 144). As the search for and murder of black men continued, many black families fled to the nearby black cemetery and swamps to hide. The number of black people killed that day is contested; Umfleet writes that the "coroner performed fourteen inquests but other evidence indicates that the total number of deaths was as high as sixty" (p. 1). Some died from exposure in the swamps and others from gunshots. In a report, a resident doctor at the Wilmington City Hospital noted that of the two white men and twelve black men that were brought in that day, "all except the two white men were shot in the back" (Zachary, 1899, 134, as cited in Umfleet, 2006, p. 174).

The 1898 Massacre was a calculated series of violent outbreaks that led to a coup. Two days before the shooting, white supremacists had violently intimidated black voters and stuffed ballots to ensure county seats were given to Democrats. Afterward, they ran the mayor, chief of police, and other citizens out of town, both white and black. In 1898, Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina with over 20,000 people. Fifty-six percent of the population was black, which included middle and upper class. Eleven of the city's alderpersons were black men. Of the 26 police officers, ten were black. North Carolina had 126,000 registered black voters; three years later, the number dropped to 6,100. Today the black population of Wilmington is 17% (U.S. Census Bureau). The Wilmington 1898 Massacre was not the first of its kind in the South, but the white supremacists' tactics inspired the murderers in the Atlanta Race Massacre of 1906.

Framework for Reflections

Students vocally resisted working with Sites Set for Knowledge until they learned about the massacre and visited some of the forgotten sites of 1898. To help students think through their change in interests, I had them write three reflections. The first came directly after our class discussion, in which the students pushed back on the project. The second came directly after they went into downtown Wilmington to visit the sites related to the 1898 Massacre. The last acted as their final for the course, inviting them to reflect on grant writers' role in doing locally-based social justice work.

Because the first two reflections related to particular events in the class and the third was a summative reflection, I analyzed the reflections independent of one another. I downloaded and de-identified each reflection. I then did multiple coding passes, starting In Vivo and later adjusting to theme coding. Under my university IRB's approval, I gained students' permission to use their reflections and names.

Analysis and Findings

The Pushback – Nonprofit Project in Upheaval

Students' initial reaction to the nonprofit's service was pushback. They appreciated the goals that Sites Set for Knowledge sought to achieve, but they were concerned that technological barriers of Popwalk might prevent the Wilmington community from accessing—using and thereby benefiting from—the service. As I will explain, though their initial reaction was one of hesitance, their pushback opened the door to discussing issues of access in grant writing.

The Class Discussion

Students expressed concern after having met with our nonprofit client. In a debriefing conversation, we discussed their takeaways and concerns in working with Sites Set for Knowledge. We began by naming the strengths and potentials of Popwalk. The students admired David's passion for supporting a community's social justice work through digital art, and they hoped David could find a way to financially support artists. They also appreciated the idea that the exhibits on the app. could potentially exist indefinitely. After these first few points, the discussion became less moderated by me and turned into a conversation in which students started responding to each other. This change came as the students tried to articulate how Popwalk worked. They wanted to know how a site or location would enhance art and vice versa. They wanted to know how digital media—observed through a mobile device—could actually enhance a person's locational experience. They started asking questions about what type of art would and would not be included. Popwalk's service was, in a word, abstract to them; and unfortunately, there were no exhibits published on Popwalk in the Wilmington area, so students could not view an example. This conversation of questions quickly turned into a list of major concerns and limitations that students were passionate about.

Visibility was one primary issue students cited: if the grant was funded and artists produced works in Wilmington, would citizens know to visit the locations and view the art? Would people know about the Popwalk app? Students wanted assurance that David had a clear plan for broadening and promoting Popwalk's viewership. Only participating artists, a few university art programs, and a handful of art galleries and museums knew of the app, David had explained. Outside of this audience, the application was niche. The students questioned, therefore, why David would not use

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a platform such as YouTube or TikTok. David, they interpreted, seemed hesitant to adopt mass-media distribution techniques to promote the application. At the suggestion of using a major video-sharing service, the students' conversation became quite passionate, with one student raising their voice, exclaiming, "then why not use YouTube!?"

A second issue was access to technology. Would viewers have the means to download the app and watch digital media on location? At first, a couple of students explained how they appreciated that Popwalk was not a gatekeeping tool. They liked that anyone with a phone could view the art, and that access was not dependent on visiting museums or galleries. But at the mention of "phone," the tone of the conversation switched. They disliked that access to the art was entirely dependent on smartphone technology and most likely data plans. One student questioned how the nonprofit's service could be considered a "public" service if it precluded members of the public without smartphone access. They felt this was a serious socioeconomic oversight and assumption on the part of Sites Set for Knowledge.

The last issue was the eclectic nature of the nonprofit's service. Popwalk seemed to favor "high art," a term students used to describe art created and appreciated by an art-literate community. When David explained that Popwalk published site-specific digital artwork, students did a double take. What is site specific, they asked, and what counts as "digital" artwork? The students questioned whether "digital art" could include a static image, such as a digital painting or a photograph of a painting. They referenced our conversation with David and an example he gave of artists' skill at transforming space, to turn a seemingly random field into something important and memorable. Why, they asked, would this be desirable? Students could not conceptualize a realistic use scenario for the Popwalk app. One student was flabbergasted by the notion that anyone would want to view art in location on a mobile device. Doesn't the "digital" part defeat the purpose of being in the environment, they asked, doesn't holding a mobile device cheapen going into nature?

The class conversation concluded with a stressed and disgruntled feeling. Put succinctly, the conversation ended with three concerns expressed in this basic narrative:

1. First, will people know about Popwalk?
2. Second, if they know about it, will they have the means to use the technology?
3. Third, if they do have the means, will they understand or desire to use the service?

Weaver

The First Reflection

After this class discussion, I wondered whether we should switch projects. The students had an entire week and a half (due to spring break) to think through the project between our pushback discussion and our next class meeting. When we convened, I asked students to articulate their hesitations and concerns in a reflection. Their responses identified six issues: increasing user base and awareness, understanding the technology, explaining the how-to's and technical concepts, being persuasive, fitting or matching with stakeholder (the granting agencies') goals, and securing funding.

In the reflections, students highlighted the need to increase the app's user base and understand the technology well enough to describe it to others, two points related to their concerns about access stated above. One student pointed out that David seemed to target users already familiar with the app, which seemed to contradict the aim of granting agencies intending their funds benefit as many people as possible. They saw a need to increase the user base, but they also expressed unease about the pressure for writing a grant if they did not understand the nonprofit service. Jenna Tripp highlighted the rhetorical need of matching the nonprofit's goals "to the actual [funding] org. values," and Dylan Sessoms explained, "I don't have the 'high art' mentality that I worry may be needed to write the grant efficiently and effectively." Learning to think like an artist was a concern echoed in many of the students' reflections. They felt that if they did not understand the app, they could not believe in it; such belief, they implied, would be necessary for them to write a successful grant.

After they reflected, we discussed their desire to move forward. If the students did not believe in the cause this nonprofit sought to achieve, I did not want to force them into the collaboration. I pointed out that we had not yet discussed the particular community need this nonprofit's project would address. If we abandoned this project, we would be neglecting the ongoing racist aftereffects of the massacre that occurred in 1898. We agreed that we would learn more about the 1898 Massacre before deciding on whether to work with Sites Set for Knowledge.

The Reversal – Nonprofit Project is Important

Guest Speaker

The day after our pushback conversation, I learned that my colleague Dr. Josh Roiland and his journalism class were studying the 1898 Massacre. To help his students

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understand the impact of 1898 in the city of Wilmington today, he took his students on a tour of some of the relevant locations. Dr. Roiland graciously took me on this tour, and visiting the sites made it immediately clear how the Popwalk app could draw out erased histories and inform those unaware of 1898. Dr. Roiland then agreed to come speak with my class to help them understand the political context of the event and how it impacted the city today. His visit provided students with a passionate account of the events and examples of what the impacts are today, giving students context for connecting the historical events to the city's current streets. He described his journalism class's work with the Third Person Project, demonstrating how nonprofits today can help our community seek racial healing.

Site Visit

I had two goals for the site visit: one, help students connect history to the spaces in which they live, and two, help them understand how Popwalk functions “in the field.” We visited the location of The Daily Record, the intersection where the first shots of the massacre took place, and the city's 1898 Memorial. In between these sites, we followed a path that imitated the sequence of events from November 10, 1898, which I patterned after my colleague Dr. Roiland's tour. Students had the option of not attending because the trip was not a stated expectation of the course. To account for students who may not travel with the class, I created a Google map that detailed the path we would take during the visit. Ten of the twelve students came. Of the two who did not attend, one was sick, and the other had already visited the sites. We caravanned in five cars, and to narrate the trip I hosted a Zoom call in which students who were passengers in the cars joined so they could hear me explain each site. The trip took about an hour of class time.



Figure 3: Photo of the location of The Daily Record, now an empty lot.

We visited the location of The Daily Record first (Figure 3). We parked along the narrow city street and stood, phones in hand, in front of what is now an empty lot. On the left side of the lot is a house with a historical plaque indicating the home's construction date and the names of its historical owners. On the right is the Saint Luke AME Zion Church. In between is an empty lot, the former location of The Daily Record, owned and now used for parking by the church. No sign or plaque marks the burning of the newspaper, and the students are horrified. The location itself is nondescript, contrasted with a photograph of the Red Shirts after having burned The Daily Record. In the photo, the second floor of the building is charred, and a large mob of white men stand with rifles and smiles, posing for the picture. The empty lot juxtaposed with the photograph imparted an odd feeling of silence, and the students described it as surreal and somber. Later, one student described the empty lot as painfully underwhelming. To test Popwalk on location, students watched a placeholder video. They noted some usability problems but also emphasized how such an app could help reframe the experience of standing in front of the lot. From this location, we drove four blocks east to drive by the historical marker of Alex Manly, located on a downtown main street. Figure 4 shows the text of this marker. Other scholars have noted the problematic language on this sign, as did the students.

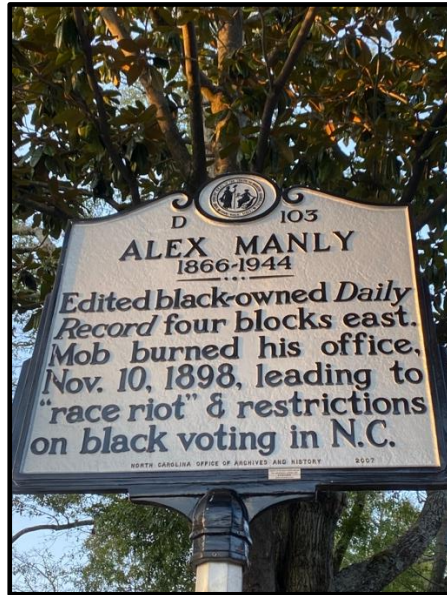


Figure 4. Note the skewed representation of the event as a, in quotation marks, “race riot.”

Next, we visited the intersection of 4th St. and Harnett St. (Figure 5), where the shooting began. Like the empty lot of The Daily Record, this location is indistinguishable from other downtown Wilmington streets. On 4th street, there are a few restaurants, and on Harnett, a line of apartments and houses. The northeast corner is an empty lot. No sign, markers, or otherwise reference the event. Considering the location’s history, the space was also underwhelming. In their reflections, students mentioned evidence of gentrification and an emptiness. They described the location as evidence of purposefully erasing history, evidence of community disdain. They were surprised at the lack of 1898 acknowledgment. Students again used Popwalk to try and envision what it would be like for users to come to this location and view content on the subject.



Figure 5: 4th St. and Harnett St., location of the first shots fired.

The third site we visited was the 1898 Memorial Park (Figure 6), located a block away from 4th and Harnett. The memorial was dedicated in 2008, and it represents the hard-earned success of individuals like Bertha Boykin Todd in raising capital to construct a public space that “influence[s] our understanding of the past” (Mattingly, 2008, p. 135). The artist Ayokunle Odeleye created the sculpture, which features six large paddles in a semicircle to symbolize water, “an important element in the spiritual belief systems in Africa and their descendants who resided in Wilmington during the 1800’s” (Todd, 2010, p. 130). The students noted how digital artists may align with Todd and Odeleye to claim “prized public space” (Mattingly, 2008, p. 140) to honor the victims and learn from the events of 1898.



Figure 6: Photo of Ayokunle Odeleye’s installation at 1898 Memorial Park.

The Second Reflection

The class period after the site visit, I asked students to reflect on how going to the locations and using Popwalk impacted their understanding of the project. The site visit changed their perceptions of 1) Popwalk, 2) the historical event, and 3) the sites and city locations themselves.

Most notably, students’ attitudes towards Popwalk and the grant writing project changed. While students initially resisted working with the app, Faith Kane wrote, “Standing in the physical, now void, locations was a somber experience that increased the importance of using the platform of Popwalk to inform people of the Massacre of 1898.” Others, such as Connor, expressed similarly that “visiting the locations...broadened my understanding of how Popwalk can be used.” Though many noted some usability concerns with the app, they nevertheless stated, as Connor continued, that in class “we should shift away from talking about...issues with the project itself and focus on what makes Popwalk unique. ...I believe the uniqueness and potential of Popwalk has vastly outweighs any issues the app has currently.” Students explained how going into downtown helped them understand the purpose of art in addressing a community need. The empty lots and lack of signs prompted the students to suggest that Popwalk needs to focus on awareness of the event.

Visiting the sites also enhanced their understanding of the 1898 Massacre and Coup. Lucy Heuring wrote, “visiting the locations of the 1898 Massacre truly gave me

a better understanding of the event itself...; however, being able to see and be at the physical locations where these events occurred aided me in gaining a real understanding at a more personal level.” Jenna mentioned how Dr. Roiland’s class visit put her “into the mindset of thinking about what happened not as a piece of history, but as a piece of the spaces where I live.” Jenna realized that she currently had “a polaroid of my roommates and I on the grounds of the first shots fired in the massacre.” When she had taken the picture, she did not know of the massacre. Visiting the location prompted her to write, “what a horrible part of history that I just have sitting in my living room.” The historical, yet unmarked, sites “grounded” the event, “intensified” and helped her “appreciate the true gravity” of the historical event. At the close of the site visit, Madeleine Burrus said to me that the combination of the guest speaker and site visit changed her perception history. “I always thought history was what happened. Now I see history is always changing.” The site visit helped students connect to 1898 events on a more personal level.

Last, the site visits changed the students’ perception of the community spaces in which they live. It made the locations “surreal” and “chilling.” Though the empty and nondescript spaces had initially seemed “innocuous,” the unmarked and empty lots “just made the space feel almost dead,” Connor wrote. A number of the students mentioned the intentionality of the unmarked spaces. Some wondered if the city was trying to “conceal history,” and others questioned the “factual” ethos of historical markers. Faith wrote, “visiting the physical locations where horrific events took place in our city intensified the gravity of the event and developed disdain for situational/locational ignorance in my mind.” Many expressed their frustration, as Hope Grubbs exemplified, “it feels like very little effort was put into recognizing and honoring the histories of these places.” Victoria Anderson added, “even as a local I did not know this history and it goes to show how much information is hidden away within society.” The students’ second reflection expressed somberness about the spaces in which they live.

Though initially concerned, by the end of the site visit, students were passionately committed to working *with* Sites Set for Knowledge. Going to these sites seemed to change how they not only looked at the app and the project, but it also changed how they thought of the personal spaces in which they live, work, and recreate.

Discussion

Observing my students resist and then embrace our semester project helped me see the benefit of balancing rhetoric and genre instruction with community work in grant writing classes. The site visit's influence on my students' attitudes showed that they are capable, and even want, to understand how their rhetorical skills apply to greater causes. I argue, then, that grant writing classes have the potential to help students see and contribute to participatory community work; as intermediaries, grant writers can advocate for using PD methodology to include citizens in the creation of projects intended to improve their communities. Participatory design (PD) methodology has helped me reflect on and understand the major shift my students exhibited. The methodology also helped us in class discussions explain the grant writer's potential intermediary role in nonprofit community work, and it gave students a better sense of how nonprofit work fits and can be facilitated within the broader aim of community design. I use this last section to explain how I used PD to make sense of the students' shifting interest in the project; then, I end with some suggestions for how this might be applied to other grant writing classes.

Access as A Principle of User-Centered Design

Regardless of the app's UCD limitations, addressing the students' concerns paved the way for them to find value in the project, which helped me articulate a more critical view of access. After the site visit, we, as a class, examined their initial hesitation to Popwalk. First, we realized how our perception of Popwalk's value was influenced by video services like TikTok and YouTube, which make video access ubiquitous; we can view any video in almost any location. Access to content on Popwalk, in contrast, is dependent on physical location. A black artist's content on Popwalk, therefore, would not need to compete with biased—even racist—algorithms (e.g., Bryant, 2020). Second, we recognized that the students' initial focus on Popwalk's limitations overlooked the power of site-based narratives (O'Brien & Sanchez, 2021; O'Brien, 2022) and the potential that locational technologies have for encouraging democratic discourse (Butts & Jones, 2021) and building participatory counternarratives (Frith & Richter, 2021). Popwalk's location-dependent access to content offers affordances for artists to tell stories in ways that ubiquitous-sharing video apps do not. Popwalk, we realized, might provide a way for citizen artists to challenge the dominant 1898 narratives in Wilmington.

Access As a Principle of Participatory Design

Participatory design emerged as the second type of access. While UCD attuned us to whether a user could access art via the app, PD helped us recognize the power citizen artists might access if they could become co-designers of 1898 public memory. We developed a more layered understanding of access, then, by asking ourselves the questions:

- Who had access?
- To what did they have access?

Popwalk helped students understand how grant writers can be agents of change. Not only were students aiming to fund stories that would impact end users, but they were also seeking to fund community members to act as co-designers, via Popwalk exhibits, of the city's historical narratives.

While access is a principle of PD, it is not often listed in heuristics for its implementation. One exception is Michelle Simmons's (2007) community work in helping citizens become decision-makers in environmental justice issues. Access is a principle of power, Simmons notes, as the methodology positions users, citizens, or any non-experts as designers. Traditionally, notes The Denizen Designer Project report (2022), "[i]t is often the lack of access to design materials or formalized design thinking that limits" (n.p.) citizens from becoming decision makers in projects created to help their community. PD methodology, therefore, asserts that citizens and users have expertise that designers do not, explains Simmons. Clay Spinnuzzi (2005) somewhat indirectly offers a term for characterizing the role of a technical communicator. He notes the need for having "mechanisms," such as shared language, that allow users to participate in a design project. He does not name these mechanisms "access" mechanisms. However, something like shared language does act as a form of access for users as well as highlighting the important role of access mechanisms in facilitating co-design. I argue that grant writers are uniquely positioned to act as access mechanisms. For one, they act as mechanisms when they facilitate the movement of resources from one to another. But stepping away from a rhetoric-focused approach to grant writing, we should also view grant writers as access mechanisms in their potential for providing community members formal or a validated entry and means of participation in a project.

Providing access is crucial because, as O'Brien (2022) details, not all citizens have the means to change spatial narratives through institutional means, such as

historical markers. Historical markers are an informational report, explains O'Brien, that are often racist in their location, selection of content, and representation of historical events. O'Brien's argument about Texas historical markers resonates with this cause in Wilmington, NC: "the institutions empowered to approve new markers" and "the exclusionary and ambiguous application process" preclude, erase, and "minimize experiences of BIPOC people" (p. 121). In North Carolina, for example, historical markers must be placed on numbered county or state roads. This explains why the historical marker for Alex Manly (Figure 4) is four blocks away from the location his press was burned. While the current location of the marker is installed where more people will see it (a main street downtown), visiting the actual location is void of any historical reference. Popwalk, the students noted, is positioned to offer artists a way to develop a counternarrative in this particular location.

Grant writers are in a unique position. They must align the values, mission, goals, and needs of multiple parties—namely, the nonprofit organization, the funding agency, and the community—into one document in order to write a persuasive grant. Grant writers, therefore, often go into their communities to observe and learn how intended projects may fit citizens' needs. As such, they can be in positions to identify who needs to be at the design table and what kind of expertise they can bring to design a project. Likewise, as contracted or hired by the nonprofit, the grant writer is positioned to understand the traditional designer intents for community projects. This intermediary role offers grant writers the opportunity to influence community projects. Not only can they ensure communities receive the funds they need, but they may also be positioned to empower users and citizens as designers, giving "primacy to human action and people's rights to participate in the shaping of the worlds in which they act" (Simonsen & Roberston, 2012, p. 4). Considering PD, then, instructors can encourage students to ask these kinds of questions when working with nonprofits: what is being designed? Who has access, and who does not, to be designers? How can we include those currently excluded as participants, not simply recipients of grant funds?

The Third Reflection

While the students did not explicitly reflect on their understanding and application of PD, their third reflection did ask them to think about the role of a grant writer. Their comments fit into two categories, comments that indicated a role of being rhetorical experts and genre masters and comments that indicated a sense of community building and PD. Rhetorical expertise comments identified the grant writer's role in securing funding, writing eloquently, researching, directing funds, and ensuring alignment of

goals. Community-centered comments included building genuine connections, bringing people together, working towards a better community, providing a voice, advocating, having genuine interest in the project, and serving as ambassadors of communities they serve. Two students specifically noted a shift in thinking about grant writing as rhetorical activity to a community activity. Hope explained that grant writers “don’t just show up with a check, they involve themselves in the community to provide the best support possible.” And Connor wrote, “Initially I would have said that [a grant writer’s] role is to create a rhetorical narrative framed around a grantor’s needs in order to gain funding for their agency. However, I would now... say that a grant writer is also an ambassador for the needs of their community.”

Conclusion

While grant writing is a rhetorical activity, grant writing classes should seek ways to help students see their work as extending beyond persuasive writing and genre mastery. This article reports a case in which my semester began with an unbalanced focus on rhetoric. Due to students’ pushback in working with our nonprofit, the semester shifted towards helping students understand their role in facilitating participatory community work. After pushing back, students visited downtown Wilmington, NC sites to consider how the nonprofit might help address the skewed and erased history of the 1898 Massacre currently provided through historical markers and empty lots. The site visit offered students a way to see that, in terms of access, grant writers can ensure that concerns of usability and UCD are addressed while also finding ways for community members to enter the design of community projects created by nonprofits. Instructors should help students see the difference between the types of access UCD and PD.

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