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# Crossing Over to the Multimodal Side: A Study of the Consensus Building Strategies Employed by Miami University in Support of a Multimodal First-year Writing Curriculum

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# CROSSING OVER TO THE MULTIMODAL SIDE: A STUDY OF THE CONSENSUS BUILDING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY MIAMI UNIVERSITY IN SUPPORT OF A MULTIMODAL FIRST-YEAR WRITING CURRICULUM

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Title: Crossing Over to the Multimodal Side: A Study of the Consensus Building Strategies Employed by Miami University in Support of a Multimodal First-year Writing Curriculum

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This single-case study examines the consensus building strategies employed by the Digital Writing Collaborative (DWC) at Miami University in support of the implementation of a multimodal first-year composition curriculum. This study focuses on circumstances within the institution that facilitated the curricular shift, specific strategies employed in developing institutional consensus, and how institutional stakeholders are working toward sustainability of the new curriculum.

Miami University's curricular innovation is significant. Expansion of multimodality into first-year writing curricula signals a greater acceptance of multimodal composition pedagogy and suggests the possibility of further expansion of multimodal practice across disciplines. The inclusion of multimodal composition practice in first-year writing courses by extension formalizes the role of multimodality within the academy and redefines academic discourse itself as multimodally constructed. This shift demands an ideological re-alignment that involves not only the re-conceptualization of literacy as multiple, but also a re-conceptualization of the function of digital technology within literacy instruction.

This study revealed a number of actions and circumstances that facilitated the implementation of the multimodal curriculum. The ideological infrastructure at the university was consistent with the objectives and actions of the curricular innovation. As a result there were significant resources available for technological upgrades, conversion of physical infrastructures, and faculty development.

The success of the program was developed over time and was not dependant upon a single individual. As a group, the DWC embraced an ideology of inclusion that served to build relationships across campus. They also developed successful articulation strategies, including a focus on multiple pedagogies. Early implementation of programmatic assessment practices figured prominently in their success.

The program still faces challenges, such as obtaining additional resources, both financial and human, and continued development of ideological consensus within the English Department. The DWC continues to work towards developing a formal plan for programmatic sustainability.

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## INTRODUCTION

As we enter the twenty-first century, composition studies is poised to lead higher education in America toward innovative theories and pedagogies that have the potential to displace historically standard conceptions of text, literacy, and knowledge. Once limited to the linguistic, literacy, or the "set of discourse practices" that all of us utilize to construct our identities and our worlds, is now being redefined as multiple (Gee, "Orality" 39). This redefinition is due in large part to the growing recognition that literacy, in addition to being situated and contextual, also involves the construction of knowledge utilizing symbolic forms other than the linguistic, including numerical, visual, aural and spatial modes - or forms - in which existence is represented. It is no surprise that as the definition of literacy has changed, so too has literacy instruction.

The redefinition of literacy as multiple and not limited to linguistic symbolic systems has generated a body of theoretical work, including work in New Media Literacy by such scholars as Selfe, Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, & Sirc (*Writing New Media*), Selfe (*Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: the Importance of Paying Attention*), Selfe and Hawisher (*Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Literacies*), Kist (*New Literacies in Action*), Lankshear and Knobel (*New Literacies*), and Kress (.*Literacy in the New Media Age*). New Media Literacy theory, while defining literacy as multiple, focuses upon digital technology as both a medium, or means of conveyance of ideas or information, and a mode, or form in which existence is represented. The New London Group's "Pedagogy of Multiliteracies", also argues that literacy is multiple and demands fluency in forms other than linguistic symbolic systems. Though other symbolic systems

might utilize digital technologies, the NLG extends its definition of literacy to include such non-digital modes as geography. Both theoretical frameworks arise from the recognition of multiple meaning making channels that individuals use to construct knowledge, and by extension their realities.

Thus we have seen the advent of what I will heretofore refer to as Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy (CMCP). I say 'refer to' because there is only limited agreement on the vocabulary used at this point in time to define theory and practice involving multiple literacies and literacy instruction using multiple modalities. However, for the purposes of this study, I will use the term CMCP to refer to literacy education practices that draw from literacy theories that define literacy as communicative practice utilizing multiple symbolic systems, including but not exclusive to the linguistic, for the construction of knowledge. This includes classroom practice that encourages students to both construct and critique texts using a variety of materials and modalities, including, but not exclusively using, alphabetic semiotic design.

## The Study Rationale

Though the emergent literacy theories just mentioned have impacted upon individual classroom practice, wide-spread formal curricular change is only just now beginning, particularly at the university level. For some time there has been a strong contingent of compositionists advocating the use of computers in composition. This use has primarily utilized digital technology as a medium through which to distribute linguistic text. Additionally, much of the curricular implementation of Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy (CMCP) occurring at the university level has taken place in upper division courses, as opposed to the institutionally foundational freshman

composition courses (Anderson, et al.). However, a small but significant number of institutions are paving the way as the innovators of this literacy practice within first-year writing programs. Institutions such as Michigan State University and Ohio State University have incorporated multiple mediums and modalities as literacy tools into their existing, linguistically-based first-year composition programs, usually in the form of specific assignments or individual courses with a multimodal focus.

Miami University, however, has implemented a formalized, institutionally sanctioned multimodal first-year composition curriculum. Their program is significant in that they have created a dual program, with one strand of first-year writing that focuses exclusively on traditional linguistic text and another strand that focuses on the construction and critique of multimodal text. The linguistic strand is not privileged within the institution and both strands are presented as equally valuable options for students. This curricular innovation is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, expansion into first-year writing curriculum signals a greater, and perhaps more mainstream, acceptance of Multiliteracies and New Media Literacy pedagogies. Additionally, inclusion of this practice in first-year writing suggests the possibility of the further expansion of multimodal practice across disciplines. If students have the tools to compose multimodally, other disciplines may be more inclined to capitalize upon the skills brought by the students.

Most importantly, if first-year composition is designed to enculturate students into the conventions of academic discourse, the inclusion of multimodal composition practice in first-year writing courses by extension formalizes the role of multimodality within the academy and redefines academic discourse itself as multimodally constructed. This shift

demands an ideological re-alignment that involves not only the re-conceptualization of literacy as multiple, but also a re-conceptualization of the function of digital technology within literacy instruction.

Traditional orientations towards digital technology perceive of the digital as primarily a medium, or means of transmission of information. Within this world view, digital technologies are seen as mediums which serve primarily as a means of distribution for representations of reality, for example word processors are the means of distribution of the words that act as the representations of reality. On the other hand, the world view, or ideology, at work in New Media Literacies and Multiliteracies theories includes the perception that the digital, in addition to functioning as a medium, also functions as a mode in and of itself by virtue of its ability to produce and serve as a form through which reality is constructed. The digital does not only transmit knowledge; it serves as a place where realities come into being, for example, social networking spaces and virtual worlds such as Second Life.

Adherents of the more traditional world view see digital technology as word processors, storage receptacles, and transmission devices. Adherents of the other world view see digital technology as a locus of identity formation, where the self and the world in which the self exists are constructed. Because of these widely divergent perceptions, as well as other long-recognized challenges to curricular innovation, the ability to build consensus in support of multimodal literacy instruction within institutions is a difficult, but necessary task.

This dissertation will present a case-study of the Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University in order to examine the process of consensus building behind their

innovative first-year multimodal composition program. My primary research question is: how was institutional consensus developed in support of the implementation of Miami University's multimodal first-year composition curriculum? This study will focus on circumstances within the institution that facilitated the curricular shift, specific strategies employed in developing institutional consensus, and how institutional stakeholders are working towards sustainability of the new curriculum. Additionally, this dissertation will examine what I deem to be the most successful strategy the Digital Writing Collaborative employed at Miami University as they implemented their digital writing curriculum: a commitment to respecting ideological diversity and working ethically with all members of the university community – a perspective that is in accordance with the ideological positions espoused by the scholars who established the principals upon which Multiliteracies Pedagogy and New Media Literacy are founded.

## Contested Ground

In part due to the evolving nature of the field of composition, the terminologies associated with the theoretical paradigms of multiliteracies pedagogy, new media literacy, and multimodal composing are dynamic. There is no formal vocabulary to be harnessed or adopted in discussing concepts associated with these theories. Like the theories of literacy(ies) themselves, the words associated with them are often contested ground. By this I mean that the words associated with these theories often have multiple uses, and, as well, that practitioners in the field claim their own definitions for many terms based upon their specific contextual use and the world view of those employing the terms. As such, many of the terms that I have chosen to utilize in this dissertation have multiple, complex, or ambiguous meanings. It is therefore necessary to set forth clearly

the way in which I intend certain terms to be understood for the purpose of this study and in order to reflect my own ideological positioning or world view.

*Ideology*

The term "ideology" is mentioned frequently in this dissertation and is therefore an apt place to begin. Mannheim observes that "for most people, 'ideology' is closely bound up with Marxism" but then goes on to point out that ideology has had different meanings both before and after the advent of Marxism (55). Williams notes that Marx and Engels use of the term implied a sense of ideology as illusion, false consciousness, unreality, upside-down reality…" (128). My use of ideology within this text has nothing to do with the use of the term that is associated with Marxism. Eagleton, after announcing from the start of *Ideology: An Introduction* that " nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology" (1), spends much of *Ideology* attempting to determine a working definition, while examining all of the various historical and sociological conceptualizations of the term. He finds that "the term ideology, in other words, would seem to make reference not only to belief systems, but to questions of power….that ideology has to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class" (5), and ultimately declares that "the term 'ideology' is just a convenient way of categorizing under a single heading a whole lot of different things we do with signs" (193).

Though semiotic theory is associated with the theoretical foundation of Multiliteracies Pedagogy, it isn't a focus of this study, nor for that matter is the concept of ideology. Apple argues though, that "the study of educational knowledge is a study in ideology" (43). I do, in fact, use the term "ideology" frequently as I attempt to assess the various power shares at stake in the negotiation of new curriculum. To that end, my use

of ideology involves the negotiation of power as represented through various world views and belief systems, particularly as these belief systems impact upon societal conceptualizations of literacy.

*Literacy*

The evolving conceptualization of literacy is central to this discussion. Gee argues in S*ocial Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* that literacy is a "socially contested term" (22). One would be hard-pressed to disagree. Despite the observed contestation, Gee finally settles upon a definition that I consider appropriate to the subject undertaken in this study. Gee states, 'literacy is the mastery of a second discourse" (*Social Literacies* 143). I generally agree with his argument that all individuals have primary discourses, or "ways of being in the world" (*Social Literacies* 127) – generally acquired through interaction in the home and immediate environment. As well, Gee observes, most individuals have secondary discourses, "those to which people are apprenticed as part of their socialization within various…groups and institutions outside early peer-group socialization…" (*Social Literacies* 137). Therefore for my purposes, and borrowing from Gee, literacy refers to the ways that all of us dialogue or "be" in the world, generally acquired through modeling within the family or immediate social unit. As well literacy includes what we consciously learn through interactions with the groups and institutions that make up the societies in which we live.

But Gee and many others no longer believe that literacy is monocultural or monomodal. The New London Group (NLG), of which James Gee is a member, coined the term "multiliteracies" to refer to the variety of literacies that individuals must possess in order to obtain the greatest level of individual agency in society. The NLG breaks

down the various literacies into five primary categories or modes: audio, spatial, gestural, visual, and linguistic (26).

### *Modes and Mediums*

When I refer to modes I am referring to the forms through which existence is represented, including but not exclusive to writing, music, art, architecture, and dance. According to Kress, another member of the NLG, "mode is the name for a culturally and socially fashioned resource for representation and communication" (*Literacy* 45). Kress observes that

> when we think of the affordances of modes in communication, we can no longer think of writing, or indeed of 'language'…as sufficient to all demands of representation and communication….hence, the realization of meaning in the mode of writing is now just one possibility among others: when meaning can as easily emerge in music as in writing, then the latter has lost its privileged position. (*Literacy* 12)

However, in academic settings linguistic text is still the privileged form of literacy. Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy offers the possibility of aligning academic and other social literacies by developing the capacity of students to construct using multiple modalities and critique representations utilizing multiple modalities, hence the term "multimodal". Throughout this text when I refer to the term multimodal I am referring to the multiple forms or resources through which existence is represented.

The aforementioned multiple modes are used to represent existence; mediums are used to transmit these representations. For example, the book is a medium to transmit the

linguistic mode of written language. Computers can serve as mediums of transmission for information, images, sounds, etc. Williams in his seminal work *Keywords* observes that

> It is interesting that sense (i) depended on particular physical or philosophical ideas, where there had to be substance intermediate between a sense or a thought and its operation or expression. In most modern science and philosophy, and especially in thinking about language, this idea of a medium has been dispensed with; thus language is not a medium but a primary practice, and writing (for print) and speaking or acting (for broadcasting) would also be practices. It is then controversial whether print and broadcasting as in the technical sense (ii), are media or, more strictly, material forms and sign systems. (169-170)

The lines between what constitutes a mode of representation and what constitutes a medium of transmission are more and more indistinct. Digital technologies are a case in point. Kress notes that "the actual power of the technologies lies in the fact that at one level all information is held in the one code of binary numbers, and from that code information can be re-represented in any mode, whether as music, color, speech, writing, or image" (*Literacy* 12).

### *Digital Technologies*

Technology itself can be an ambiguous term. Generally we think of technologies as objects or systems that provide a means of constructing other objects and information. Literacy education has always utilized technology; pencils, blackboards, pens, and typewriters are all technologies. Digital technologies, which are more specifically referred to in this dissertation, include those technologies that use numerical code to

represent, store, and communicate data. For my purposes digital technologies will encompass all uses of digital computerization, particularly the use of digital processing to both produce texts in multiple modes and distribute texts through digital mediums.

Digital technologies serve as both medium and mode, insomuch as they offer both a means of transmission and a means of representation of existence. Wysocki argues that "these possibilities of other choices - along with how newer technologies have shifted the economics of publishing so that writing and layout needn't any longer be separate functions – ought to show us finally, that our media really are modes" (13). Digital technologies both produce, which constitutes a mode of representation, and distribute, which constitutes a medium of transmission.

*Materiality and Text*

Though central to a discussion of multimodality is the issue of whether the digital technologies function as modes or mediums, another issue is whether new media is solely constituted by the digital. Haas notes in defense of the digital as a material form, that "even pixilated screen images, although they may not seem material in the same way as do marks chiseled on a clay tablet, depend upon several kinds of material apparatus both for creation and for perception and use" (4). Wysocki argues, though, that "new media texts do not have to be digital….New media texts can be made of anything" (15). When referring to materiality, I refer to the actual material existence of an object or text, as well as the impact of the object or text's material being on its form and function.

The issue of materiality is central to New Media Literacy. Haas observes that "the material world matters; that is, that the materially-based conduct of human activities has profound implications for the development of human culture and the shape of human

consciousness" (4). The materiality of literacy is directly connected with the development of societies, whether the material form is digital or otherwise. Wysocki urges that "what is important is that whoever produces the text and whoever consumes it understand…that the various materialities of a text contribute to how it, like its producers and consumers, is read and understood" (15). Materiality is central to what is and is not considered text, and therefore central to the discussion of the ways in which we construct and represent our realities.

Kress in *Literacy in the New Media Age* observes that "a theory that deals with multimodality comes up against the need for a usable definition of text, given that our present sense of text comes from the era of the dominance of the mode of writing, and the dominance of the medium of the book" (36). Kress's definition of text as "any instance of communication in any mode or in any combination of modes" serves my purpose (Literacy 48). It should be noted, that although the Miami University curriculum is organized by the Digital Writing Collaborative and the course offerings are referred to as digital writing sections, the Miami University curriculum is self-avowedly multimodal. The content of the digital writing courses focuses on the construction and critique of multimodal texts. The use of digital in the course title refers to the use of digital technology as a mode for use in the construction of multimodal texts, but it also refers to the digital medium through with other modes may be accessed and transmitted. The reasoning behind their choice of name and course title will be explored in greater depth later in this document.

This glossary serves to offer the reader a foundation from which to approach the study presented in the following chapters. As well, it highlights the difficulties any

faculty might encounter in attempting to "sell" a multimodal first-year composition curriculum. The contested nature of literacy itself poses a significant barrier to such a curricular innovation, but implementing composition pedagogy that utilizes digital technologies as both a mode of representation through which knowledge is produced and existence is represented, as well as a medium through which other modes of representation may be transmitted, poses an even greater challenge – though one which Miami University has successfully negotiated.

## 21st Century Literacies

Composition and literacy scholars, in order to acknowledge the changing face of meaning making, have mutually readdressed conceptions of literacy and what it means to be literate in culturally diverse, technologically immersed contemporary society. As a result, literacy has, over the past twenty-five years or so been significantly redefined. Of particular relevance to this study is the work of the New Literacies Studies proponents.

### *New Literacies*

In the mid-eighties, literacy began to be considered not as a static set of skills, but rather as an active, ongoing social practice "…problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking 'whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant'" (Street, "What's New" 77). James Paul Gee, another New Literacy Studies theorist, acknowledges that New Literacy Studies was 'basically a social, cultural, and political approach to literacy" ("Social" 105), arguing that "language and literacy acquisition are forms of socialization" and that "discourse practices are always embedded in the particular world view of a particular social group; they are tied to values and norms" ("Orality" 59). He states that "claims for literacy are…ideological"

and advocates an “ideological model” of literacy proposed earlier by Street “in which literacy is viewed in terms of concrete social practices and the various ideologies in which different cultural expressions of literacies are embedded” (“Orality” 51).

### *New Media Literacy*

In recent years there have been a number of scholars, among them Wysocki, Selfe, and Selber, who have advocated inclusion of new media as objects of literacy instruction and as components of culturally defined literacy, what I refer to as New Media Literacy Studies. They argue that use and study of digital technologies and digitally constructed texts in the teaching of language is integral to preparing individuals for active participation in society. Moreover, the redefinition of text to be multimodal, that is – encompassing modalities and mediums other than linguistic and alphabetic --, is becoming widely accepted among literacy educators. This interest includes most prominently the digital, and incorporates the auditory, kinetic, and, of course, visual; meaning that the preparation of individuals for active participation in society cannot begin and end with instruction in language. Rather, literacy instruction must include all modes and utilize all mediums, including new media forms.

The debate over what constitutes old and new media is a subject more suited for another discussion, but let it be stated for the purposes of this dissertation that new media refers not only to digital technologies, but also to prior media forms that have been remediated. According to Bolter and Grusin, remediation occurs when “new media refashion prior media forms” (273). They observe that “each new medium has to find its economic place by replacing or supplementing what is already available” (68). New

media refers to not only the materiality of the media form, but also to the ways in which new media forms are used.

### *Multiliteracies*

In their manifesto, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures", the New London Group developed a theory of textual definition, critique and construction for the twenty-first century which they entitled Multiliteracies Pedagogy. The NLG have coined the term "Design" to mean both the process of constructing meaning in multiple contexts, and also the articulation of meaning. Design refers to the action of designing, but also to the materiality of what is available to engage in the action of designing. Multiliteracies Pedagogy demands that literacy be defined along semiotic terms, based not solely, as in the past, upon fluency with alphabetic text, but rather upon the capacity to create text using multiple symbolic forms in order to represent meaning and design life worlds (NLG 20).

They argue that literacy that is linguistically based is limited in many ways. Firstly, there are multiple ways of being in the world; the linguistic is only one. Limiting literacy to the linguistic not only represents being in a limited way, it can be and often has been used to limit the ability of certain groups, cultures, or social classes, to be within society (NLG). The sorting of individuals into two groups: the literate and illiterate assists in reinforcing societal power structures, legitimizing those deemed literate and delegitimizing those deemed illiterate. Petrucci observes, that "illiteracy carries a stigma tantamount to criminal or immoral behavior….it is often viewed as a lack of willpower, a weakness or a moral failing" (46). This perception of illiteracy as a personal failure on the part of individuals reinforces the classification – both social and economic – of the

illiterate as a class of little societal importance, and as a result, possessing little societal power.

A broader definition of literacy is not only more appropriate to the way in which lived experience is constructed, it is also more socially just – in that it acknowledges the multiple ways that individuals participate in the construction of our shared reality. Figuring prominently in the NLG's discussion of the multiplicity of literacies needed to obtain the greatest amount of agency in the world, is the role of technology and its ability to enhance or detract from an individual's ability to participate in societal conversations. However, technology is not the sole focus or objective of their pedagogy. They also, for instance, consider literacy to include the ability to critique and construct numerical, kinetic, and geographic texts (NLG 28).

The New London Group in their manifesto "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" state "we propose to treat any semiotic activity, including using language to produce or consume texts, as a matter of Design…" (20). Wysocki cites Kress and Van Leeuwen in stating "a mode is that material resource which is used in recognizably stable ways as a means of articulating discourse", and, as she later goes on to posit, that individuals who consciously utilize multiple modalities "design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody" (13-15). All three theories encourage the consideration of literacy and literacy education to involve various symbolic representational systems, with New Media Literacy Studies including digital, visual, audio, and alphabetic literacies, and focusing not so much on the modalities themselves but rather on the "range of materialities of texts" (Wysocki 15).

Digital technologies complicate literacy discussions in a variety of ways. They challenge us to recognize the digital as not only a medium but also a mode of representation. As well, the materialities of digital technologies pose additional social and economic challenges relating to use and access. The digital realm is an ideological space. Not only is the digital a medium through which ideological positions are transmitted, it is also a mode through which ideological positions are constructed and represented. It is no wonder then that there is such difficulty in achieving ideological alignment when incorporating digital technologies into academic institutions.

## 21st Century Challenges

Technological advancements have acted as a catalyst for much of the curricular innovation recently occurring in literacy instruction, including composition, and as such are inextricable from any discussion of multimodal composing. Over the past two decades, scholars in educational administration and policy, literacy studies, cultural studies, composition studies and other fields, have grappled with the impact of what Toffler refers to as the "Third Wave", the wave of technological advancement that has swept the world beginning mid-20th century and will continue to sweep the world into the foreseeable future. These technological advancements have altered the way in which we conduct every aspect of our daily lives. Toffler argues "…what is happening is not just a technological revolution but the coming of a whole new civilization in the fullest sense of that term" (331).

This "Third Wave" has already brought about changes in societal expectations for educational institutions in both content and structure. Educators and theorists in a variety of disciplines have seen the larger ideological implications attending the massive

technological changes sweeping the globe. Kerr cites the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1973 as identifying the major purposes of higher education in the United States as:

> The provision of opportunities for the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, and skill development of individual students, and the provision of campus environments which can constructively assist students in their more general developmental growth.
>
> The advancement of human capability in society at large.
>
> The enlargement of educational justice for the postsecondary age group.
>
> The transmission and advancement of learning and wisdom.
>
> The critical evaluation of society – through individual thought and persuasion – for the sake of society's self-renewal. (16-17)

25 years later in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-first Century,* Selfe defines technological literacy in a way that encompasses and expands upon earlier objectives for literacy education and education in general. Selfe posits that:

> Technological literacy refers to a complex set of socially and culturally situated values, practices, and skills involved in operating linguistically within the context of electronic environments, including reading, writing, and communicating. The term further refers to the linking of technology and literacy at fundamental levels of both conception and social practice. In this context, technological literacy refers to social and cultural contexts for discourse and communication, as well as the social and linguistic products and practices of communication and the ways in which electronic

> communication environments have become essential parts of our cultural understanding of what it means to be literate. (11)

The re-definition of literacy as plural did not come without precedent. The inclusion of digital literacy as a part of literacy education arose out of earlier re-conceptualizations of literacy articulated by Brian Street and the coining of New Literacy Studies (NLS). NLS positioned literacy as no longer the domain of the economic elite, but rather asked educators and society in general to frame literacy as situated and contextual, as befits the education of everyman. As a result it can be said that New Literacy Studies paved the way for current work in literacy studies and was instrumental to the construction of Selfe's definition of technological literacy. However, since technology is in constant metamorphosis, it demands an unending renegotiation of language, text, our selves, and our world. Therefore, the definition of literacy in any form, technological or otherwise, will by necessity remain fluid and defy classification and demarcation.

Attendance to technology, particularly as pertains to communication and critical assessment of technologically produced texts, is not new in certain disciplines, for instance, design and media studies. Since about the early eighties, New Media Studies has focused on the ways in which new media impacts upon culture. Although most often recognized as addressing texts constructed via digital technologies, proponents of new media expand their definition to include any texts which utilize technologies in their distribution and production (Manovich 19-20). For the advocates of new media, technology holds the promise of greater and more diverse discourse for members of society, so long as they are prepared to critically engage the various new media texts

surrounding them. In “Students Who Teach Us”, Cynthia Selfe suggests that “in a postmodern world, new media literacies may play an important role in identity formation, the exercise of power, and the negotiation of new social codes” (51).

*Technology and the Academy*

Academic institutions will by necessity be expected to adapt to the changing technological landscape facing global society in the 21st century. In the US, education, higher education in particular, has had to deal with an onslaught of technological change that has often overwhelmed it. In the case of digital technologies - from financing to faculty development to discerning which technologies are here to stay and which might be transient as well as costly -- the societal and educational changes brought about by technological innovations have in many cases been difficult to assimilate. All of these concerns are problematized even more when observed alongside the ideological divide between those who perceive of digital technology as a mere medium and those who recognize it as a mode of representation of reality. This ideological divide may be most clearly manifested in terms of age groups.

Consider the impact of technology on the generation gap. Data collected in 2001 by the U. S. Department of Education revealed that “about 90 percent of people ages 5 to 17 use computers and 59 percent of them use the internet – rates that are, in both cases, higher than those of adults” (Scanzoni 197). This trend seems to support Selfe’s observation in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century* that “adults raised in the twentieth century may be incapable of educating children for the world of the twenty-first century” (20).

As technology has spread throughout society and the academy over the course of the last forty years, it has posed significant philosophical questions for society. Beyond questions involving citizenship and its rights and responsibilities, technology has brought us to reconsider what had not been reconsidered, at least in the U.S., perhaps since the Civil War. Specifically, technology has asked us to address what it is to be human. What is a mind? What is thought? How does thought come into being? These questions and the technological advances that precipitated them call to question identity and self-hood.

Turkle has observed that these technological advances have resulted in "eroding boundaries between the real and the virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unitary and the multiple self" (10). Technology has demanded a re – and ongoing – discussion of what it is to be alive, what it is to exist actually and virtually. Scientific advances have developed to such an extent that we can no longer answer any of these questions definitively. In the face of this technological change, we find ourselves grappling with "instability of meanings and the lack of universal and knowable truths" (Turkle 18). Perchance Toffler was correct in stating that technology poses a challenge to civilization as we know it. If so, it is then understandable that the university has experienced difficulty in addressing such uncertainties and the technological innovations that produced them.

Initial innovations in response to digital and computing technologies tended to the practical, addressing issues of commerce and economics. In the 90's, President Bill Clinton articulated the mandate that all citizens develop computing skills and that all educational institutions make the teaching of these skills paramount in their curriculums (Selfe 57-59). Institutions at the secondary and collegiate levels attended to the inclusion

of computing skills as an interdisciplinary objective. The difficulty, however, was in defining what was encompassed by the term "technological literacy". Even as late as 1996, the U. S. Department of Education defined technological literacy as involving "computer skills, and the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance" (qtd in Selfe 10). Much of the response on the part of the educational community developed in terms of providing computer training – such as keyboarding and word processing – for students and instructors. As well, we saw the development of computing centers, where large numbers of machines were made available for students to utilize. Word processing afforded obvious benefits. Student work had the potential to be packaged more attractively and completed in a more timely fashion.

Other benefits and potentialities were less obvious. Even with the advent of the Internet or World Wide Web, the majority of educators at the turn of the twenty-first century had, at best, ambivalent feelings about technology in higher education. Cuban points out:

> By 2003 one would think that incorporating new technologies into undergraduate instruction and the regular use of computers in the classroom would be an accepted, widespread practice at a majority of U. S. higher education institutions. However, recent statistics show that this is not the case. "Out of every ten teachers in this country, fewer than two seriously are users of computers and other information technologies in their classrooms (several times a week); three to four are occasional users

> (about once a month); and the rest – four to five teachers out of every ten – never use the machines at all (qtd in Spodark 14).

Sax argues that despite recognizing the benefits of technology in the classroom for students, most instructors still use it primarily for personal or professional reasons (qtd in Spodark 14). Even those who foresaw the educational implications of digital technologies often failed to see the deeper philosophical implications. They knew they were on the right path, but where and how far the path might lead they couldn't actually articulate. Spodark identifies lack of vision and lack of leadership as two significant reasons for higher education's failure to adapt to technological advancements (16).

Part and parcel of this difficulty in foreseeing the future of technology in education has to do with the perceived costs associated with it. Technology was and is justifiably perceived as expensive by most educational stakeholders, from administrators looking for the cash to effect infrastructural improvements, to students whose rising tuition costs often help fund those improvements, to taxpayers whose pockets bear the brunt of any costly shift in public education policy. Any suggested infrastructural change in public education begs the question, who is going to pay for it? Certainly stakeholders might be justified to ask if it is all really necessary when students and teachers had managed so well for so long with pen and paper. What could computers and digital technologies really offer individuals? Are the associated costs worth it?

With technologies changing and multiplying so fast it has always been difficult to answer these questions, both in higher education and society as a whole. Just as we determine a use for one aspect of technology we discover twenty others. Just as we determine that a technology is too expensive, cheaper ones are deployed. Just as we

embrace the cheaper forms, new, more expensive technologies emerge making the earlier and cheaper obsolete. And if it all changes so fast, if it all becomes obsolete so quickly, how can society and its educational institutions, much less students and instructors, keep up?

Often left to their own devices with little in the way of top down leadership, various disciplines have handled technological challenge and the inherent ideological conflicts better than others. Composition and Literacy Studies have been two sister disciplines that have met the conceptual challenges of technological transformation, and the ensuing pedagogical changes, even when specific institutions have not been able to rise above their financial and ideological limitations to meet the material challenges posed by new technological advancements.

*Technology and Composition*

Within the past ten years, literacy theory and by extension composition theory have responded to technological change and new conceptions of meaning construction and textuality by advancing pedagogical frameworks that include composition of text utilizing multiple modalities and demonstrating multiple literacies. Within the composition and literacy communities there has been nearly constant conversation, and more importantly, significant agreement that literacy in contemporary society must be defined as situated, contextual and, specific to my purposes, multimodal. Wysocki, Selfe, Kress, Cope, Kalantzis, Gee, Fairclough, Cazden, Luke, Street - the list of those advancing New Literacies practices, including Multiliteracies and New Media Literacies, reads like a ‘who’s who’ of renowned scholars in the literacy field. However, classroom pedagogy and practice must follow theory in acknowledging and encouraging students’

multiple literacies and the variety of modalities available to them as they construct -- design -- their worlds.

Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy, though not widely practiced at the college level thus far, holds promise of fulfilling contemporary literacy instructions' goal of expanded agency and civic participation for members of society. Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy envisions literacy practice as utilizing and comprised of multiple mediums and modalities. It responds to arguments that literate individuals must be able to both construct and critique text presented in and utilizing a variety of modalities and mediums, and that literacy education must sanction the conception of literacy as engaging multiple literacies. "The new multimedia and hypermedia channels can and sometimes do provide members of subcultures with the opportunity to find their own voices. These technologies have the potential to make possible greater autonomy for different lifeworlds…" (NLG 16-17). Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy affords individuals the opportunity to practice and develop multiple literacies in an effort to secure greater individual agency for all members of society.

New Literacies, New Media, Multiliteracies – share a common thread: literacy is redefined to include symbolic forms other than alphabetic text. This shift away from literacy defined as solely alphabetic to literacy defined as comprising multiple representational forms, including the digital, has had serious ramifications, specifically, but not exclusively, for educators in the fields of English, Language Studies, Literacy Education, and Composition. Selfe observes in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention,*

> At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly clear that teachers of composition, English studies, and language arts also have two much larger and more complicated obligations: first, paying attention to how technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education in this country; and, second, helping colleagues, students, administrators, politicians, and other Americans use their increasingly critical and productive perspective on technological literacy to make productive social change. (xxiii)

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, this shift in perspective demands a realigned self-identification. Apple cites Huebner as observing that,

> Legitimating language serves to establish a person's claim that he or she knows what he or she is doing, or that he has the right, responsibility, authority or legitimacy to do it. In short, it re-assures a number of groups and people, not the least of whom is the educator himself, that he or she knows and has a right to continue along doing what he or she has been doing all along. (75)

Traditional definitions of literacy have served to legitimize the power of educators as a result of their own culturally perceived literate status.

However, the intellectual, economic and social elite don't own literacy anymore. In fact, our students possess literacies that the societally identified intellectual elite may lack, most obviously the visual, digital, and aural literacies that are the earmark of those under the age of 30. This re-conceptualization of literacy as not only multiple, but also multimodal, calls into question cultural and institutional ideologies, and social and

educational hierarchies. The world of teacher and student becomes a far more complex place when literate status is up for grabs. Digital technologies add to this complexity, Ryan, et al note that, “in the future, with increasing flexibility of access, the distinction between being a student or teacher may become blurred” (162).

Redefinition of literacy as multiple and multimodal necessitates a redefinition of power structures and who does or does not have power in both the cultural communicative exchange and the educational. All media, all signs and symbols are ideological representations. Multiliteracies Pedagogy ascribes ownership of technological media and the accompanying ideological representational power to all users. Because technology and digital media are increasingly becoming the locus of societal critique, construction, and reconstruction, power to utilize these forms of representation assumes not only local but global significance. Within educational institutions technology acts as a mediating force, offering the potential to redistribute control over knowledge construction and distribution -- and by extension power. The resultant redistribution poses a great challenge to all cultural institutions. For though some previously without it will gain power, others, perhaps those most used to possessing and wielding power, may well lose it.

## Praxis

We talk of the democratizing force of these new theories, the promise for greater acceptance of diversity and expanded participation. Now what? Theory and praxis are two very different things. Application of any theory is tricky business. Application of theory that challenges long held assumptions and institutional power relations may seem impossible. Combine the naturally occurring difficulty associated with embodiment of

abstract theoretical concepts and the added complication of theory integrally involved with technology – often a cause of fear and frustration in higher education, not to mention financial stress – and we find ourselves with quite a challenge to be faced. These new theoretical paradigms call for a re-examination and re-invention of all that we have taught and continue to teach in our composition classrooms.

Multiliteracies Pedagogy has been met with some enthusiasm overseas. The New London Group instituted the International Multiliteracies Project. There are as well various other national Multiliteracies Projects in existence around the world. Individual instructors have been documenting their experiences with multimodal instruction; however, much of the work involving application of Multiliteracies Pedagogy has occurred at the secondary levels. Attention at the university level has been to a much lesser extent, though there are a number of institutions around the world who are actively incorporating the pedagogy at the university level, primarily in education programs, including York University, the University of Toronto and the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. Within the confines of American universities we have seen sporadic response to this pedagogy via the implementation of multimodal practices, generally based upon individual instructors' interests, and usually in higher level or targeted technologically oriented courses.

However, over the past several years we have seen a growing discussion about the use of new media in composition courses at the college level. More composition educators are beginning to not only conceive of text, particularly academic text, as multimodal, but are also determined to incorporate multimodal textual critique and construction into their pedagogies – often via the use of digital technologies. Although

certainly influenced by the theories mentioned above, this shift has also been in part a response to students' facility with various communicative mediums and digital modalities, including their multifaceted use of cellular phones, and their interest, perhaps absorption, in the visual and aural. This not a flaw on the part of the new generation of college students, but rather a sign of the times, one that demands a re-conceptualization of what it means to compose text, what constitutes text, and who owns text as well as the means to produce it.

Asserting that text is multimodal and diverse, and that the production of text is no longer the domain of the pen and paper at the desk under the watchful eye of the instructor, a growing body of compositionists and their institutions have determined that we ought to be teaching students how to critique textual representation in various modalities and construct text using those same modalities: hence the advent of multimodal composition as first-year composition curriculum. As a result, there is now sporadic and limited response to New Media Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies Pedagogy in the college composition curriculum, via the use and integration of multiple modes and media in the teaching of composition.

This attempt to innovate on an institutional level has neither been swift in coming nor widespread in acceptance for obvious reasons. It demands a complete re-conceptualization of not only literacy, but also of the power structures in place in academia. It blurs disciplinary lines to such an extent that it challenges the disciplinarity upon which the modern university is founded. Innovation of this magnitude demands commitment and concession on a university-wide, if not a nationwide scale. Institutional

infrastructures will be challenged at all levels: financial, material, intellectual, pedagogical, departmental, divisional, and disciplinary.

Anderson, et al. working from a CCCC research grant conducted a study examining the practices of instructors using multimodal or multiliteracies pedagogies or methodologies. The 140 question survey, administered via email, set out to paint a broad picture of current classroom practice geared towards inclusion of new media and multimodal text critique and design. Though this survey was instructive in determining some trends, such as what instructors are doing in their classrooms and what issues are involved in advancing this classroom practice, the authors themselves identified a lack of formal programmatic focus or support for these pedagogies.

In order for this innovation to succeed both institutionally and throughout academia, and not simply be a random collection of individual instructors' courses, curricular application must be thoughtful, integrated, cohesive, sustained and widely practiced on an institutional level. It is only through sustained institutional support that meaningful and widespread curricular innovation can occur. Work has been done examining facilities and finances, and we have some understanding of cost and classroom design – and, perhaps more importantly, the ways in which these and other, more invisible, structures are at work within institutions. DeVoss, Cushman and Grabill "map the infrastructural dynamics that support -- or disrupt new-media-writing instruction" in their article "Infrastructure and Composing: The When of New-Media Writing" (14). We understand that institutional ideologies can inhibit or assist new media writing instruction. What has not yet been fully examined are the strategies being used to develop

institutional alignment in order to facilitate funding and support. In other words, how do the players make a team and engage in the game?

## The Study Objective

Miami University, a public university located in Oxford, Ohio, was established in 1809. According to the "Quick Facts" page on the MU website, there are approximately 14,500 undergraduate students enrolled at the Oxford campus. Of these, 54% are female and 46% are male. The majority of students, 65%, are from Ohio. The average SAT Verbal score is 580, and 78% of incoming freshmen take English 111: College Composition ("Assessment Brief #38"). With close to 100 faculty members, including temporary and adjunct, the English Department houses several programs, including the College Composition Program. As of spring 2009, 38 of the 112 freshmen composition courses offered are labeled Digital Writing and taught in either laptop or hard-wired computerized classrooms. Digital sections of freshmen composition are overseen by the Digital Writing Collaborative (DWC). The DWC, whose goal was to develop and establish a multimodal composition program at MU, was established by members of the College Composition Program, and first successfully implemented a multimodal composition curriculum, which they entitled Digital Writing, in 2005 (Alexander, et al 1-2). The program has garnered strong support across the institution among faculty, administration, and students.

My objective in this dissertation is to examine how this individual program, the Digital Writing Collaborative of the College Composition Program at Miami University, has come to advance multimodal pedagogy on an institutional basis. I mean to explore what institutional and/or programmatic beliefs, values, and ideologies were in place or

activated in order to facilitate this specific curricular innovation. I look to produce a "how to", so to speak, for institutions attempting to cross over to the multimodal side by presenting a case study of Miami University's Digital Writing Collaborative's process of consensus building and alignment of institutional ideologies in support of a multimodal writing curriculum as a part of their first-year writing program.

This "how to' will unfold throughout the following chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature addressing the shift from literacy to new literacies to multiple literacies, issues faced when implementing curricular innovation, challenges facing the university today, and the difficulty of incorporating instructional technologies in higher education curricula. Chapter Three details the methodology used in undertaking this study. Chapter Four examines the challenges facing institutions attempting curricular innovation previously outlined in Chapter Two, and discusses the ways in which Miami University engaged existing ideological structures on the campus in order to facilitate the development of the curriculum. Chapter Five discusses strategies employed by the DWC that are exclusive to their specific curricular implementation and ability to develop consensus at their institution. Chapter Six examines sustainability issues still facing the program, observes additional steps needed to maintain institutional support, and suggests strategies for other programs attempting curricular innovation. By studying the impetus behind the shift, the process of conversion, the details of infrastructure and faculty development, and the ideological underpinnings of the program and institution, I am hoping that this case study will allow me to provide a guide that will facilitate the expansion of Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy in other first-year composition programs.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The specific addition of critical multimodal literacy instruction to first-year composition curricula must be addressed not only in relation to past and existing literacy curricula, pedagogies, and methodologies, but also in relation to institutional cultures. By this I refer to the institution of higher education in America, as well as specific institutions seeking to implement this curricular innovation.

Though multimodality has garnered significant support in the fields of composition and literacy studies, this support may not extend beyond these disciplines. Within these disciplines this support may also be challenged by academic community members uneasy with the transition from theory to practice. In addition, because multimodality implies an even greater technologization of teaching and learning, within an academic culture that may be described as having had a love/hate relationship with technology, it might be expected that any such innovation within first-year writing curriculum may meet with resistance on the part of faculty, staff and administrators.

Any discussion of multimodal pedagogy, particularly its application in first-year writing curriculum, must be examined within the framework of previous institutional experiences with curricular innovation. For instance, the history of technological innovation within the university speaks directly to ways in which institutional ideologies might be positioned to assist or resist curricular and pedagogical change. As well, curricular innovation must be considered in light of current institutional trends, including marketplace ideology in response to new capitalism, the commercialization of education, and the shift in characterization of the individual as producer of knowledge, to the

individual, as Gee suggests, as a portfolio of acquired skills and completed projects ("New People" 47).

This chapter seeks to examine these wide ranging issues and the ways in which they may have influenced Miami University's recent attempt over the past several years to expand the definition of freshman composition to include critical multimodal literacy. Specifically this chapter will examine:

- Influences on the development of Multiliteracies Pedagogy and Multimodal Composition Pedagogy.
- Prior research on curricular innovation, including faculty development and infrastructural support.
- Institutional trends that may influence curricular change within the university, including issues of disciplinarity, diversity, and ideological positioning.
- Implementation of digital technologies in higher education.

Analysis of Miami University's process of developing consensus in support of a multimodal composition curriculum can only be assessed within the context of multimodal literacy theory and its application in higher education, prior efforts at curricular reform in higher education, the larger institutional concerns that influence adoption of new curriculum in higher education venues, and perceptions of the role of digital technologies within higher education and society at large.

## From Literacy to Multiliteracies

The development of multimodal composition as a pedagogy at the college level, and certainly the implementation of digital composition at Miami University, could not

have occurred without a history of linguistic, literacy, and composition theory supporting them. Anderson, et al. in "Integrating Multimodality into Composition Curricula: Survey Methodology and Results From a CCCC Research Grant" cite five primary theoretical sources from which adherents to multimodal composition pedagogy and practice draw. Wysocki and her co-authored text *Writing New Media* (Wysocki, Selfe, Sire, Johnson-Eilola) are the most often mentioned influences from which multimodal composition pedagogues draw. Gunther Kress and sometime co-author Theo Van Leeuwen are identified as the second most cited theoretical sources; specifically cited are Kress and Van Leeuwen's works *Multimodal Discourse* and *Reading Images*. Additionally cited is Kress' *Literacy in the New Media Age*. Wysocki/ Writing New Media and Kress/Van Leeuwen are followed by Lev Manovich and his *Language of New Media*, Bolter and/or Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation*, and lastly The New London Group (of which Kress is a part) and/or Cope and Kalantzis' *Multiliteracies* – a book length expansion of the New London Group's work (76). Each of these texts should be considered as seminal works influencing multimodal composition theory and practice.

Linguistic theory, New Literacy Studies (NLS), and semiotic theory have all influenced curriculum and curricular decisions in higher education in ways that allowed for the development of literacy and composition theory involving critical use of new media. Influential in laying the groundwork, it could be said that NLS gave birth to the later Multiliteracies Pedagogy, New Media Literacies Studies, and Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy. However, in order to understand the ideological underpinnings of these literacy theories, we must begin, not with a compositionist or literacy theorist, but with the linguist and cultural theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin.

*Bakhtin*

The fundamental argument to be found undergirding the majority of Bakhtin's work but most explicitly stated in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* is that all that is in existence is in an active, dialogic relationship. Bakhtin states "life knows two value centers that are fundamentally and essentially different, yet are correlated with each other: myself and the other; and it is around these centers that all of the concrete moments of Being are distributed and arranged" (74). Existence itself is a process of exchange. This process of exchange extends from the physiological to the communicative. Because we are, all of us, in a constant and, most importantly, unique state of exchange or dialogue with all that is around us, we are fundamentally responsible for the construction of our realities.

> Here lies the point of origin of the answerable deed … I, too, *exist* [et ego sum] actually – in the whole and assume the obligation to say *this* word. I, too, participate in Being in a once-occurent and never repeatable manner: I occupy a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else. In the given once-occurent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurent time and once-occurent space of once-occurent Being….That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else. The uniqueness or singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellently obligatory. (Bakhtin 40)

This responsibility, though, is also mitigated by the mediating effect that other voices provide. As a result of this unique dialogue in which each of us engages with self and other, all of our existences, experiences, expressions, communications, and responses are

unique, and as Bakhtin referred to them – once-occurent. This philosophical perspective places the communicative event squarely in the specific, situated, dialogic moment and defines communication on all levels, and indeed Being itself, as relational, mediated, and constantly emerging.

Bakhtin's footprint is found all over New Literacy Studies, Multiliteracies Pedagogy and New Media Literacy Studies. The determination of the situated moment as the locus of all communicative exchange; the relational character of language; the rejection of language, communication, and reality as static and beyond the control of the individual; the positioning of self and other as ideological positions in dynamic conflict; all underpin the aforementioned literacy theories, as well as semiotic theory.

### *New Literacy Studies*

Brian Street is a major proponent of New Literacy Studies. In *Literacy in Theory and Practice* he outlines the most prominent literacy theory of the time, the autonomous model, and then argues in favor of, what he terms, the ideological model of literacy. Arguing that autonomous models of literacy focus on an essay text form of literacy that is a "narrow, culture-specific literacy practice" (*Literacy* 1), he advocates for the adoption of an ideological model of literacy that focuses on the "specific social practices of reading and writing", recognizing that literacy practices are ideological and "culturally embedded" (*Literacy* 2).

Street traces the development of both models, outlining specific scholarship related to each of the models. His objective in doing so, and in promoting an ideological model of literacy theory, is to refute claims that literacy skills as defined in the autonomous model determine cognition and meaning making. He states "if we can

establish that literacy practice involves a socially variable set of conventions…than claims for its consequences will not so easily be disguised as universal truths. Such claims will be shown to rest, instead, on faith in the value, indeed superiority, of particular conventions" (*Literacy* 29).

Street's work lays the groundwork for later theory involving multiliteracies. His perception that literacy is not directly connected to the material apparatus in use, but rather to the specific social interaction, supports the argument that literacy then ought be defined as multiple in accordance with the multiple discourse communities of which all humans are a part. As such, no one communicative technology or modality can or should be used to define literacy practice. Street states:

> The particular technologies associated with different literacy forms have been varied and rich...Each has its own specific history and is connected with particular social institutions and functions. Social control has often been exercised by means of control of the materials associated with it…..but literacy, of course, is more than just the 'technology' in which it is manifest. No one material feature serves to define literacy itself. It is a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes. (*Literacy* 97)

This perception that literacy involves social action utilizing various communicative technologies is directly related to semiotic theory, another theory that underlies Multiliteracies and New Media Literacy theories.

### *Semiotic Theory*

Semiotic theory involves the study of signs and their function and structure in society, holding that signs are everywhere around us acting as symbols and representations of ideologies. Multiliteracies Pedagogy and New Media Literacy Studies have drawn extensively from semiotic theory. Everything has the capacity to function symbolically, and every symbol is an ideological representation. Therefore literacy requires that individuals be able to transact using whatever signs and symbol systems are at their disposal and being utilized within any communicative moment. For proponents of multiliteracies and multimodal composition pedagogies, this means that literate human beings must be able to critically interpret and utilize visuals, sounds, and gestures, along with the more traditionally recognized literacies involving alphabetic and numerical symbol systems. Gunther Kress, a founding member of the New London Group, has written at length on semiotic theory, literacy theory and visual literacy theory.

In *Social Semiotics*, Hodge and Kress expand upon previous semiotic theory by drawing on the work of Saussure, Peirce, and other early theorists. Hodge and Kress argue that semiotic theory has in the past focused almost exclusively on the linguistic as the foundation of semiotic representation, to the unwarranted and erroneous exclusion of other representational and communicative forms. “Moreover, a general semiotic theory must try to theorize the full range of semiotic acts, including writing, art, film, and the mass media, where relationships between participants are more complex and abstract than is the case with a face-to-face conversational exchange” (19). In his work with the New London Group, Theo Van Leeuwen, and in individual scholarship, Kress specifically advances the argument for visual literacy.

In Social Semiotics, in addition to their position asserting that semiotics extends beyond the linguistic, Hodge and Kress put forth several other arguments that are in line with predecessor Bakhtin and which support Multiliteracies Pedagogy and New Media Literacy Studies. Specifically they argue that all communication is a social process, including but not limited to language. “Discourse in this sense is the site where social forms of organization engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values which make up a culture” (6). No communicative process is static or disembodied. In accordance with Bakhtin, Kress and Hodge define all communicative exchange, all textual construction as relational and situational. “From the moment children are born, perhaps from a time before then, they are subject to the effects of semiosis and culture. The new-born enter at once into a semiotic relationship with other humans around them and, in a process which ceases only at death, they construct a world of meaning, and are already constructed by a semiotized world” (240). Though dealing specifically with language text, Street, Gee and other New Literacy Studies advocates position literacy in the same frame, as a situated, social, ongoing practice.

### *Kress and Visual Literacy*

Semiotic theory clearly provides a foundation for those adherents of visual literacy. It is not surprising then, that Kress would move from semiotic theory to visual literacy theory and ultimately to multimodal discourse theory. As early as 1996, Kress and Van Leeuwen began advocating the development of a grammar with which to structure, define, and analyze visual modalities. Their basic premise in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* is that visual modalities are deeply and socially

embedded in Western communicative and representative practice. Public discourse demands fluency with these modes as a matter, in their words, of survival (3). They are referring to social and cultural survival or at least power, arguing that "analyzing visual communication is, or should be, an important part of critical disciplines….we see images of whatever kind as entirely within the realm of ideology, as means, always, for the emergence of ideological positions…" (12).

Kress and Van Leeuwen identify all modalities and resultant material objects as socially mediated and uniquely produced for and within specific contexts. They charge that individuals must have the means to explore various modalities and their limitations and possibilities. It is through this meta-knowledge of semiotic resources, as they refer to them, that individual agency might be increased. Kress and Van Leeuwen follow up these arguments in their later text, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, which again focuses on developing the means, by way of vocabulary and systemic structures, of engaging in a study of modalities and their use.

Kress once again addresses these themes in *Literacy in the New Media Age*, arguing that global social structures are changing and that a greater understanding and conscious facility with the variety of semiotic resources at our disposal is necessary. Kress states with some urgency

> The effects of the move to screen as the major medium of communication will produce far-reaching shifts in relations of power, and not just in the sphere of communication. Where significant changes to the distribution of power threaten, there will be fierce resistance by those who presently hold power, so that predictions about the democratic potentials and effects of

> the new information and communication technologies have to be seen in the light of inevitable struggles over power yet to come (1).

This discussion thread involving the nature of power is a recurring one in his work. Clearly Kress recognizes the social and cultural shifts underway in the world; he is interested in far more that a simply theoretical argument. The use of the term literacy with all of its political connotations echoes Myers' admonition that those who have defined who are and are not literate have usually looked to serve their own ends. For Kress, the "haves" have owned language and its power. Though other modalities have now positioned non-elites to claim a greater share of this power, the elites cannot be counted upon to simply acquiesce the power that they presently hold.

Kress cites the resistance to broadening of conceptions of literacy as a manifestation of elitist power structures pushing back against those who might diminish the power of their tool, language, and as a result, their cultural power. Kress, however, sees the power shift as inevitable and already underway (1). He does not see the visual as emerging; he recognizes it as here and already socially ingrained (9). Though language will remain a tool of the elite, other discourses and modalities will become more and more a part of the public sphere, thus effecting power shifts whose end results cannot be foreseen.

Kress moves from a specific focus on the visual to a more integrated theory of semiotic resources and their use in *Literacy and the New Media Age.* He postulates that the various semiotic modes work together and must be assessed as an integrated design kit, rather than separate and distinct tools (37). Digital mediums facilitate this interplay.

Kress rejects the use of the term literacy when referring to multimodalities, instead suggesting alternatives such as resources or designs (27). His point is that there needs to be a vocabulary developed that adequately represents literacy involving multiple modalities. The present vocabulary in use draws heavily from language and linguistic theory, and as such, perpetuates the privileging of language. Additionally it simply does not serve (35-36). We can't develop a new construction with used materials without compromising the design and use of the structure. A new semiotic system of analysis demands a new and specific vocabulary to attend it. Kress argues in *Literacy and The New Media Age* that "the theoretical change is from linguistics to semiotics – from a theory that accounted for language alone to a theory that can account equally well for gesture, speech, image, writing, 3D objects, colour, music, and no doubt others" (35-36).

### *The New London Group*

This concern with vocabulary and systemic analysis is a recurring theme in the works identified as seminal by Anderson, et al in 2004. The New London Group (NLG) first convened in 1994 in New London, CT, hence their name. Original members of the group include such luminaries from the worlds of education, linguistics, semiotics, and literacy studies as Courtney Cazden, Bill Cope, Norman Fairclough, James Paul Gee, Mary Kalantzis and Gunther Kress. As a result of this first meeting the group published their manifesto, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" in 1996 in the *Harvard Educational Review*. The manifesto was also included as the first chapter of the NLG's full-length text, *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*, Cope and Kalantzis eds.

The New London Group in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" clearly states their ideological position and educational mission. They argue that "the politics of culture and identity have taken on a new significance. Negotiating these differences is now a life-and-death matter….Access to wealth, power, and symbols must be possible no matter what identity markers, such as language, dialect, and register, a person happens to have" (14-15). Admonishing that existing literacy pedagogy fails to serve vast numbers of people and ultimately acts to deny individuals social agency, the NLG developed a new pedagogy that they determined would work to increase individual agency and diminish the elitist trends of traditional literacy practice.

Stating that "literacy pedagogy…has been a carefully restricted project – restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language" they advocated that educators must "rethink what we are teaching" as a result of the diversity of languages and textual forms at play in society (9-10). The result is a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies that advocates for the development and overt instruction of a metalanguage of communicative design, articulating communicative design as including and incorporating design elements such as the linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal, with multimodal design as the most significant because it incorporates and integrates all of the others.

The multimodal/multiliteracies theorists involved with the New London Group are the most overt in their ideological and political aims - the democratization of education and literacy theory and instruction. In *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*, the members of the NLG further elaborate upon their

ideological and pedagogical aims, and articulate in greater depth, what they term as, the why, what, how and practice of Multiliteracies Pedagogy.

They argue that new capitalism, technologization, and the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity that are the earmarks of the new millennium demand a change in how we conceive of education, schools, literacy, and knowledge/knowing. As well, they engage in a discussion of the theory behind the pedagogy, articulating the group's interest in educational practice that promotes social change with an end result of increased individual agency, as opposed to educational practice dedicated to reproducing existing cultural norms and hierarchies. In order to accomplish this, conceptions of language must change, and literacy instruction must focus on identity, diversity, and changing societal roles. Thus, literacy instruction must go beyond language to include all modalities that are used to construct life worlds, facilitating the development of each individual's ability to critique and construct meaning in specific contexts and utilizing the variety of representational tools available (10-12).

NLG members also address the pedagogy itself and offer examples of practice. The pedagogy is founded upon four basic objectives: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. "Situated practice" demands that students be immersed in the practice of engaging the world multimodally and becoming multiliterate. "Overt instruction" requires that students be taught the grammar, or rules and conventions of Design overtly in order to develop a metaknowledge of communication and construction. "Critical framing" allows students to critique in specific contexts, applying the grammar or metalanguage of multiliteracies. "Transformed practice" demands that students be able to critique and construct across modalities and contexts

(33-36). *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures* also provides examples of Multiliteracies Pedagogy applied in practice in South African universities, and secondary and elementary schools in the U.S.A. and Australia.

### *New Media*

Throughout the text, the NLG echoes earlier work by Kress that there needs to be a metalanguage or grammar that would allow for overt instruction in the manipulation and analysis of semiotic resources and their limits and potentialities. Manovich in his *The Language of New Media* takes up the issue as well, specifically in relation to new media. He defines new media as the use of computers to record, store, create and distribute media, including texts, still images, moving images, sound and spatial constructions (20). Unlike the NLG, his focus is not upon or addressing the sociological, political, or economic issues surrounding new media, but rather he is concerned with developing a theory and grammar of new media, specifically addressing the structures, patterns, forms, and conventions – the metalanguage of new media (12).

Manovich begins, though, by exploring the social and cultural circumstances that facilitated the development of computers, computing technologies, and ultimately new media. Citing contemporary culture's concern for what he terms a "universal equality of things" (xxi), he identifies new media's value of "individuality over conformity" (41). He goes on to point out how computers allow each individual to customize their lifestyle and even select a personal ideology from the many offered through and embodied in digital technologies, drawing parallels to contemporary marketing of brands and ideologies, targeting the individual (42). At the same time, he identifies the computer as providing a sort of, what he terms, "visual Esperanto", in that all users speak the same language of

interface regardless of cultural or economic position (xv). Arguing that computers are used for production, storage and distribution, he calls computers "universal culture carriers" (6).

Looking to situate new media in relation to other arts and media, computer technology, visual culture, and information culture, he draws primarily from cinematic theory as he proposes his grammar. He identifies five principles as the foundation for a grammar of new media: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and cultural transcoding (20). Numerical representation cites all new media as being comprised of numerical code (27). This observation is interesting given that most theorists, including him, focus on the impact of visual literacy. Perhaps numerical literacy is, in fact, the most valuable literacy and ought be privileged since it is the foundation and means of construction of the visual products and objects that comprise new media. Modularity recognizes the discrete components of new media, that each can be virtually unlimitedly combined and built upon (30-31). Automation acknowledges the fact that human intentionality is, at least partially, removed from new media processes (32). Variability references the nature of new media as unfixed and constantly reshaped and reconstituted (36). Cultural transcoding refers to the ability to translate and transfer from one format to another – or one culture to another (47). Manovich's text provides a new lens from which to perceive the literacy challenges and changes taking place.

Another perspective is provided in Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Bolter and Grusin look to analyze new media, not present a vision of the future or historical analysis of the past. Nor do they look to establish or attend to a grammar or educational interests. Instead they break new media down into

two core concepts: immediacy and hypermediacy. Immediacy and hypermediacy are like the yin and yang, or what they refer to as the alter egos of new media (34). Immediacy references contemporary culture's interest in all things personalized and individualized, live in real time. Hypermediacy refers to our obsession with multiplicity and simultaneity. Looking to address what they term the "double logic" of remediation, they argue that "our culture wants to both multiply its media and erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them" (5).

Their fundamental premise is that we want more media at work in the moment, but we want it transparent – so that it seems as though it is just us and not the machine or medium mediating our perception. Yet at the same time, we want all of the media available to us all of the time, and we want to be able to see it and use it as we wish, as well as have it disappear from view, if and as we wish. Bolter and Grusin refer to this the "transparent presentation of the real and the enjoyment of the opacity of the media themselves" (21).

A key concept Bolter and Grusin address is that of remediation. They point out that all media draws from earlier media, just as they themselves utilize the vocabulary and conceptual frame of fine art – painting and sculpture, and just as Manovich uses the vocabulary of cinema. Remediation fulfills society's desire for constant improvement by remaking new media out of the familiar reference of older media. This "representation of one medium in another" is a "defining characteristic of the new digital media" (Bolter and Grusin 45). Though their reference point is new media forms, this reconstituting of culture, objects, relationship, and indeed reality, is hardly a new concept. After all, everything old is new again, and everything new gets old quickly. They recognize yet

another paradox in that remediation as a fundamental characteristic is what is unique to the digital world, yet at the same time it denies the uniqueness of all new media, since no media can stand alone (50). All new media has been remade or refashioned out of older forms. All mediation is remediation (55).

This conceptualization of new media echoes Bakhtin's conceptualization of the dialogic nature of reality. Bakhtin argued that there was no truly unique moment in reality, since all moments are constituted by and of what has come before, as well as being the product of dialogue or exchange, which removes individual perspective and voice as the sole determinant of the moment. Yet, Bakhtin argued that this therefore rendered all moments unique and made all participants in exchange responsible for each moment of newly constructed reality.

Bolter and Grusin also address this issue by pointing out that hypermediacy and transparency and immediacy are "opposite manifestations of the same desire: to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real" (53). As well they posit that interest in authenticity is itself a social construction (71). They differ from cultural philosophers such as Bakhtin in that they are not addressing this issue as a metaphysical or philosophical one, rather they identify it as an emotional issue, arguing that individuals want to have experiences that evoke immediate and authentic emotional responses (63). New media does this for us by providing access to a multiplicity of emotional triggers, and if we so choose, that are transparent and unobtrusive.

But are these triggers, such as a virtual experience of love, the same as a real time experience of love? For all of the windows and immediacy, there is still a machine and a variety of forms mediating. Some might argue that media in actuality desensitizes us and

removes us from the authentic emotional stimulus found in one-to-one human interaction. Regardless, the question itself justifies efforts to theorize a pedagogy involving overt instruction concerning these conflicts and paradoxes. Noting that "digital technologies are simultaneously material objects and social construction", Bolter and Grusin make a compelling argument that we all ought to be aware of the mediums that we use and that are used by others in order to construct our present realities (78).

Though Bolter and Grusin, Manovich, and Kress address issues of theory and grammar, other new media literacy theorists speak more directly to the application of theory to practice, as well as cultural mandates and ramifications. First on the list of seminal works cited in Anderson, et al. is *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. A collaborative effort that includes chapters by Anne Wysocki, Cynthia Selfe, Geoffrey Sirc, and Johndan Johnson-Eilola, *Writing New Media* specifically focuses on classroom practice and pedagogy. The authors reiterate the changing face of textual representation and advocate that we and our students move from being passive observers to reflective, responsible composers (vii). In line with Bakhtinian theory and Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation, Wysocki and company argue that though we build upon previously existing, historically situated material structures, we still have the ability to maintain agency in the world (4). Yet, in order to harness the potential to "remediate" our own positions, we must have not only a grammar, but an educational practice and pedagogy from which to proceed. The field of composition studies is well-suited to this task in so much as composition and literacy theory already recognize the situated and contextual nature of human discourse. Wysocki, et al. frame their discussion of new media using composition theory and pedagogy.

The collection of essays presented in *Writing New Media* address such issues as identity construction in the composition classroom, visual literacy as a complement to alphabetic literacy and a bridge to new media literacy, and authorship and intellectual claim over remediated objects. Wysocki argues that materiality is the primary characteristic of new media (19), while Selfe advocates a more traditional view of new media as being characterized specifically by the digital (43). Regardless, both, along with Sirc and Johnson-Eilola, adhere to the belief that individuals craft positions when they construct new media representations.

As such, we have a responsibility to overtly instruct individuals in the means and processes of critiquing and producing their own and others positioning. This demands that pedagogy go beyond analysis to production of new media texts. Selfe acknowledges that this transition will not be easy for composition instructors, that the shift involves a tremendous amount of time and money. She also notes that the shift might render the once literate instructor of writing an illiterate user of new media (71). Though not claiming to provide a complete approach to teaching new media literacy within traditional composition study, Wysocki et al. instead ask the reader to be alert, echoing Selfe's earlier admonition to pay attention, to the choices we are offered and the choices we make when interacting with new media.

### *Teaching New Media Literacies*

Wysocki, et al. provide a variety of classroom activities and assignments to help compositionists on their way to becoming literate instructors of new media composing. They have been joined over the past several years by a number of other scholars looking to provide assistance to individual instructors wishing to incorporate new media and/or

multimodal text critique and construction into their pedagogies. In 2001 Patricia Dunn's *Talking Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing* was published, joined soon after by William Kist's *New Literacies in Action: Teaching and Learning in Multiple Media.* A recent addition to the literature is *Teaching Multiwriting: Researching and Composing with Multiple Genres, Media, Disciplines, and Cultures* by Robert Davis and Mark Shade. There are a variety of additional texts that provide similar material, classroom assignments, ideas, and methods to be used in introducing multimodal composing as a communicative practice.

Textbook publishers are also facilitating the spread of multimodal pedagogy by both including chapters on multimodal textual construction and incorporation of visuals and new media into written texts, as well as publishing textbooks specifically oriented to multimodal composition. Two such examples are Pearson/Longman's *Compose, Design, Advocate: A Rhetoric for Integrating Written, Visual, and Oral Communication* edited by Wysocki and Lynch, and Bedford/St. Martin's *Writing in a Visual Age*, Odell and Katz, eds.

The tools to advance theory into practice are in place; however, successful curricular innovation also demands institutional ideological alignment in support of theory. Widespread pedagogical change resulting in a demand for curricular change only serves to begin the process of converting curriculum in higher education. The following section reviews scholarship addressing the specific challenges facing curricular reform in higher education.

## Curricular Reform

Clearly curricular innovation on any scale is difficult; Miami University's implementation of digital composing as a part of first-year curriculum has to have faced even greater challenges than might otherwise be expected when implementing new curriculum. Miami University's digital composition curriculum challenges the definition of academic discourse as composed almost solely using alphabetic text. This shift in the conception of academic literacy precedes other major curricular outcomes, such as a renegotiated power structure both within the academy and within the classroom. It also demands that technology function not as an add on, but rather as an integral aspect of textual construction.

In *Ideology and Curriculum,* Apple discusses the historical role of ideology in establishing curricula at all educational levels. He cites Young in observing that "'the formal corpus of school knowledge' can become a form of social and economic control." Citing Bourdieu, he points out "schools do not only control people; they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be 'legitimate knowledge' – the knowledge that 'we all must have', schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups" (61). This does not occur by happenstance. Apple states that "the individuals who first called themselves curriculists…were vitally concerned with social control for ideological reasons…" (45). These individuals believed that "education in general, and the every day meanings of the curriculum…were seen as essential elements in the preservation of existing social privilege, interests and knowledge, which were the prerogatives of one element of the population, maintained at the expense of less powerful groups" (45).

Apple contends that education is not a “neutral enterprise”, arguing that that “by the very nature of the institution”, educators are involved in a political act (1). As such they have a responsibility to be self-reflective about institutional values, as well as their own. Apple identifies critical awareness as a necessity, arguing that

> Since schools as institutions are so interconnected with other political and economic institutions which dominate a collectivity and since schools often unquestioningly act to distribute knowledge and values through both the overt and hidden curriculum that often act to support these same institutions, it is a necessity for educators to engage in searching analysis of the ways in which they allow values and commitments to work through them. (120)

And, I would add, how they might not.

Popkewitz goes even a step further than Apple, arguing that curriculum actually serves as a governance system. He states that “the systems of reasoning embodied in schooling are the effects of power. That power is in the manner in which the categories and distinctions of curriculum shape and fashion interpretation and action. In this sense, curriculum is a practice of governing and the effect of power” (“Production” 151). As a form of governance, education teaches not only official content, but also the ways that individuals are expected to be in the world. “Curriculum is a disciplining technology that directs how the individuals is to act, feel, talk, and “see” the world and “self”. As such, curriculum is a governing practice” (Popkewitz, “Production” 152).

I do not mean to imply that all curricula, by virtue of its role as a governing practice, is “bad”, but rather that, in accordance with Apple, all curricula is ideological.

Educational curricula represents societal agendas. Instructor buy-in reflects to some extent the willingness of individuals to subscribe to these agendas. However, this requisites that instructors engage in the self-reflection advocated by Apple. Regardless, curricular reform can be interpreted as a manifestation of emerging, and often conflicting, ideologies.

Cuban has written extensively on the subject of curricular reform and innovation at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. His perspective might be guessed by reading one of his titles, “The Lure of Curricular Reform and its Pitiful History”. Arguing that curriculum is an important representation of cultural values, he points out that it is often a “battlefield of ideologies and symbols” (185). Attempts to reform curriculum often ignore this facet, as well as ideological influences on pedagogy and resulting instructor practice, instead focusing on content (187).

No curricular innovation can succeed without instructor buy-in. Faculty resistance to curricular innovation is a frequently observed phenomenon. Cuban goes beyond observation and attempts to explain why instructors resist curricular change. In “Cultures of Teaching: A Puzzle” he identifies structural conditions and organizational incentives, deep-seated traditions of teaching and learning, and the socialization of teachers and professors, as the key reasons for limited pedagogical repositioning despite passage of time, new research and developments, and significant attempts at curricular reform demanding alterations in the teaching/learning paradigm (30).

Instructors have little ongoing organizational incentive motivating change. There is little reward for adopting innovative practices, much less in creating innovative practices. As a result, curricular reform that appeals on paper and in theory often fails in

real-time application. In light of this, it is not surprising that the university has found particular difficulty in technologies integration in diverse curricula.

In yet another aptly titled article, “Computers Meet Classroom: Classroom Wins”, Cuban identifies three primary ideological stances from which the impetus arises to integrate technologies into curriculum. The first ideology seeks to model educational practice after the marketplace and perceives technology as one means of doing this. Another ideology sees technology as increasing both teacher and student productivity and thus contributing to cost saving measures. The third competing ideology embraces technology as a means to greater student participation in the construction of knowledge.

These ideological positions are hardly unrecognizable in higher education. Cuban’s triumvirate reflects the ongoing ideological disputes in which higher educators find themselves engaged: marketplace values vs. increased individual agency, blurred vs. rigidly defined disciplinary lines, diversity vs. cultural conformity, technology as a means of exercising greater social control or as a means of facilitating greater personal autonomy. Because these are in some cases so diametrically opposed, it is no wonder that integration of new technologies into higher education curricula has been hit or miss, and occasionally even contentious.

### *Technology and Curriculum*

In a 2007 study, Brill and Galloway assessed classroom implementation of technologies. Their findings were consistent with other assessments of technologies application into curriculum and practice. Most instructors still used primarily low-end technologies, such as overhead projectors and VCR’s. The authors determined that this was due in large part to a lack of technological facilities, technological support, and the

technologies themselves. Interestingly, instructors were interested in further integration of technologies in the curriculum and classroom, so long as they had support to facilitate their pedagogical visions (97-99). This again points out the importance of leadership and infrastructural supports.

Ma and Runyon in referring to something as basic as internet use state "the biggest constraint hampering higher education's adaptation of the internet is not technological resources but faculty and staff development" (367). This perspective regarding implementation of technologies' use in curriculum is echoed by Spodark and Cuban among others. Cuban observes in "Cultures of Teaching: A Puzzle" that "in 1948….the lecture format was used from one and a half to three times as often as discussion or any other teaching technique….Almost three decades later….Three of every four professors …said that their principal method of instruction was the lecture" (28-29). Ma and Runyon observed in 2004 that "most university faculty members still follow the traditional blackboard or transparency lecture modes" (368).

This has direct implications for attempts to incorporate multimodal composition into the first-year curriculum. If most instructors still rely on transparencies and blackboards, composition pedagogy reliant on digital technologies promises to be a hard sell to say the least.

### *Institutional Paradigms*

College composition instructors are themselves a part of a larger culture of education. This dominant culture defines knowledge as something teachers have and students need to get. Cuban warns that this perception of student/teacher roles underlies all attempts at curricular change involving pedagogy and practice. Educators' cultural

roles are reinforced through years of participation in the educational process as learners. When teachers are confronted by challenges, whether they be ideological or physical, they tend to fall back on well-known behaviors. These behaviors are deeply entrenched and can often undermine even those most willing to innovate.

Institutions attempting to introduce multimodal composition pedagogy to their faculty must be aware of this and look to the underlying values and beliefs informing prior practice in an effort to engage their support in instituting new practice. As well, institutions and administrations must look to their own ideological baggage in order to determine whether or not they are positioned to support or undermine their own initiatives. Instructor buy-in to curricular change, particularly when it involves a change in pedagogy and/or inclusion of new instructional technologies, must be supported by the institution wishing to implement the curricular innovation.

Anderson, et al. as recently as the 2006 CCCC's survey on the integration of multimodal composition into college curricula reported that 78% of instructors surveyed "reported no institutional reward for learning new technologies" (75). Additionally more than half of faculty members surveyed reported that electronic publications were not counted, weighted, or even considered in tenure and promotion decisions. One instructor noted when asked if they would in fact engage in digital scholarship "I will, but I will also publish conventionally – I don't think my department yet knows what scholarship in digital media looks like, or how to judge its rigor" (77).

Clearly, curricular innovation is a difficult and complex process. Attempts to challenge dominant ideologies as manifest in educational administration, infrastructure, and teaching paradigms must be well-considered and subject to extensive planning and

preparation. Perhaps most importantly, innovation can only occur with a full-realization of the deeply embedded ideologies and prior knowledge that will influence curricular success or failure. These constraints and considerations are at work to an even greater extent when attempting to implement technologies into existing pedagogies or developing and implementing new pedagogies that integrate new technologies and their accompanying ideologies.

### *Prior Attempts*

Despite the inherent difficulty in bringing such innovation to fruition in the university setting, some have tried and succeeded. The following examples illustrate both the successes and difficulties that those attempting to integrate multimodal composition into first-year curriculum may face.

DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill in "Infrastructure and Composing: The When of New-Media Writing" delineate the process of developing a multimedia writing course at Michigan State University. The authors focus specifically upon "when new-media infrastructures emerge and what the dynamics of infrastructure mean for composing in those contexts" (23). Throughout the essay, the authors articulate the difficulties Cushman encountered when trying to engage institutional infrastructures in support of new curriculum, in this case, multimedia writing. Noting difficulties with institutional computing technologies policies and resultant practices, ability of students to adequately store new media compositions, and problems with file management and software., the authors observe that "writing programs will never adequately come to terms with how to teach new-media composing unless we can come to a productive and activist understanding of infrastructure….such an understanding will allow students and

professors to anticipate and participate in a number of institutional processes that shape infrastructure and so shape how we teach newmedia composing" (22-23).

Nespor in *Technology and the Politics of Instruction* chronicles attempts to integrate information and communication technologies into the curriculum: what he refers to as CMI or Computer Mediated Instruction, at Virginia Tech in the 1990's. He delineates the history of technology adoption at that institution, examining all instructional technologies, including pen and paper and lecture-format, and positions the adoption of digital technologies within this frame. As a part of his exploration, he discusses the ideological and philosophical positions at work, both at the university and in the larger community – local, state, and national, that assisted or resisted technological innovation. Nespor uses three examples of courses converted to computer-mediated instruction models and examines the impact of the conversion on instructors and students. Though he summarizes the political issues one might expect to encounter when attempting to apply innovative curriculum or curricular reform, his extended analysis of technological integration into classroom practice and pedagogy sheds light on current attempts to integrate multimodal composition pedagogy into literacy and composition classrooms and programs.

Perhaps his most pertinent finding is that it is not so much the details of facilities and services that assist or hinder technological innovation. Success does not so much rest upon funding or physical infrastructure. Nespor observes that "change is less about dissemination than moving around and building organizational bases" (19). It is the deeply embedded mesh of ideologies and cultural practices that offers both the greatest

potential to support, as well as undermine curricular reform and innovation. In this he is in accordance with existing scholarship, echoing, for instance, the observations of Cuban.

Those wishing to advance critical multimodal composition pedagogy must attend to the significant matter of developing institutional and cultural consensus if they hope to expand this curricular practice. The development of institutional consensus involves not only expanding conceptions of literacy to include the multimodal, as well as confronting more generally recognized barriers to curricular innovation and technologies application, it also involves addressing the larger challenges, past and present, being faced by institutions of higher education wishing to compete in the global marketplace.

## Past Challenges and Visions of the Future

The incorporation of Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy in first-year composition programs, specifically at Miami University, must be examined amongst present trends and issues facing American higher education, as well as within an ongoing ideological debate over the function of higher education and public education in general. Birnbaum cites Gross and Grambsch in observing,

> as colleges and universities become more diverse, fragmented, specialized, and connected with other social systems, institutional missions do not become clearer; rather, they multiply and become sources of stress and conflict rather than integration. The problem is not that institutions cannot identify their goals, but rather that they simultaneously embrace a large number of conflicting goals. (11)

The specific circumstances fueling current conflicts, as well as possible solutions and counter arguments, are well-reflected within the literature addressing the history of

higher education, literacy education practices, and the purpose and future of higher education, both in the U.S. and globally. Lucas, in *American Higher Education*, clearly identifies and provides background for the significant issues facing higher education today, many of which have direct bearing on curricular innovation within the University, including: marketplace and governmental influences, social mission, globalism, expanding demographics and multiculturalism, financial stressors and the emerging corporate paradigm, and disciplinarity vs. inter-disciplinarity.

### *Disciplinary Boundaries*

The issue of disciplinarity is central to the question posed by this study. Any attempted curricular change involving crossing or merging disciplinary boundaries will be served by an understanding of the existing institutional structures and how deeply ingrained they are in the scholarly psyche. Institutional identity is predicated in large part on disciplinary affiliation. By its very nature multimodal composition blurs disciplinary lines and challenges institutional identities.

Traditionally, freshman composition has meant composing alphabetic text and presenting oral texts using classical rhetorical strategies. Multimodality also utilizes classical rhetorical strategies and includes both the alphabetic and the oral; however, in addition it includes the visual, aural, digital, and perhaps most importantly, the integrated combination of all of these modalities when constructing text and knowledge. In earlier contexts, this integration of modes and mediums might have been considered cross-disciplinary, while still maintaining disciplinary boundaries and turf, in so much as individual disciplines lay claim to specific modes and mediums as paths of disciplinary discourse.

Multiliteracies Pedagogy and Critical Multimodal or Digital Composition Pedagogy suggest that literacy cannot be achieved through facility with any one medium or modality, nor can any discipline lay claim to any one as their own private domain. Literacy involves individuals possessing a tool kit of semiotic resources used to construct meaning and identity. In this sense, literacy and the means of achieving it cannot be sectioned out amongst individual disciplines. Instead literacy must be considered as involving a whole range of communicative systems and, as such, developed comprehensively.

### *Literacy Movements*

Miles Myers' history of literacy and literacy instruction, *Changing Our Minds: Negotiating English and Literacy*, argues this case. Myers identifies four primary literacy movements over the course of US history: 1660-1776 signature literacy, 1776-1864 recitation literacy, 1864-1916 decoding/analytic literacy and from 1916 to present critical/translation literacy (15). The most recent period is characterized by a shift away from literacy that emphasized decoding and centralized information and "served the functional needs of a centralized city market, the centralized factory, centralized government" (98). Instead situational literacy positions literacy as contextualized and diverse, involving a variety of languages, modalities, and environments. Myers asserts "in decoding/analytic literacy, one knows something by analyzing the autonomous parts of generic language…and in the new literacy, one knows something by using and observing language in situated events" (121).

In contemporary society, individuals must be able to transact communicative exchanges and translate communicative representations in a wide variety of

circumstances, involving a wide variety of communicants. Individuals must be able to do this in part because the current marketplace demands such skill, but also because this form of literacy allows for greater participation in the responsibilities and rights of citizenship (Myers 114). As well, this form of literacy offers the possibility of greater agency, as opposed to the more passively oriented decoding/analytic literacy of the past which was designed primarily to allow individuals to respond to the demands of centralized power structures. Myers reminds us that literacy education and cultural focus on literacy have not always been designed with the good of each citizen in mind, (though no doubt the power brokers of each time considered the policies to be for the 'common good'). Myers cites Stuckey when pointing out that societal conceptions of literacy and schooling have been used to "label people as 'intrinsically inferior and wicked'", and he cites Tyack when stating that literacy has been used "to solidify the control of 'an interlocking directorate of urban elites' through professional and bureaucratic centralism" (6).

In addition to offering his own sobering historical overview of literacy models, Myers also traces classroom practices associated with each form of literacy, and makes a cogent argument for a broader definition of literacy and current literacy practices in the hopes that these practices will yield the fruit of enhanced cultural capital and greater participation for individuals. Recognizing that literacy has traditionally been defined by the societal elite to serve their own ends, he identifies recent theory on literacy and literacy education as holding promise of rectifying some of those wrongs and allowing greater numbers of people to be deemed literate and able to participate fully in a

democratic society. His assessment supports the recent redefinition of literacy as situated and multimodal.

### *The Post-Modern University*

Ongoing discussions regarding the role of higher education in a global society, the influence of capitalist values on education, static disciplinary structures and their conflict with changing societal values, all impact upon curricular innovation and associated ideological underpinnings in higher education. As well, each issue is rendered more complex by the addition of new technologies. Kerr urges that the advent of technology, the focus on economics, and the dynamically expanding student body in higher education demand a new postmodern model for the university to replace the currently existing model based upon the values of the enlightenment. He defines the postmodern university as one which believes that all discourse is political; one that seeks to use the university for beneficial rather than repressive ends; and, citing Searle, one that challenges prior assumptions about the nature of truth, reality and knowledge (5).

Kerr feels that we will be hard pressed to easily respond to the challenges facing the university because of several factors, including contradictory ideologies represented in the current university ecosystem, such as pluralistic vs. marketplace values, and disciplinary vs. interdisciplinary structures. Additionally, he identifies technological change, in particular the rapid pace at which it is progressing, as a major test for higher education.

Scanzoni perceives technology's role in higher education, though, not only as a challenge, but also as having the potential to facilitate changes in the university that might assist it, not in maintaining its international hegemony over education and culture,

but rather in adapting to the changing global culture and university student demographic. Scanzoni in *Universities as if Students Mattered* argues that the university, and in particular the professoriate, have not met the challenges facing higher education today.

He urges a shift away from a teaching paradigm and towards a learning paradigm. "Knowledge is power had forever been a commonsense adage. The masses went to college in the twentieth century to get knowledge and the 'good life' it bought. But even as they were doing it, the ground beneath them was shifting. *Making knowledge is power* has become the more suitable twenty-first century information age axiom." (158) He goes on to cite Wuff and Austin as he argues that the 'student as empty vessel' paradigm is long past, "in this new era, students require the ability to 'create knowledge instead of simply absorbing it'" (158).

Scanzoni notes the changing face of power in the new teaching/learning model "in effect the ranks of the elite are being gradually expanded once again to include what have thus far been viewed as 'ordinary' citizens. Their self-interest and the well-being of society demand that they, too, must now become knowledge makers" (158). He goes further to advocate that the university become the student and learn to harness the potentials available as a result of technological progression. Arguing that technology has indelibly altered the face, time and place of learning and student/teacher relationship, Scanzoni advises "by itself, 'wired' is bound neither by the constraints of certain fixed physical spaces, nor by set days and times, nor by predetermined lecture notes…. 'Wired' or 'wireless' says learning can happen anywhere, anytime, and within a range of circumstances" (163).

Opinions on the changing face of the university, university students, literacy, and discourse – educational, cultural, global, technological - dominate the current academic culture wars. No matter the prediction, solution, or ideological position, though, digital technology and global media and the resultant shrinking global and expanding educational worlds are central to any assessment of the current state of the university and any suggested future direction, whether it be on an institutional or curricular level.

## Technology and the University

Implementation of multimodal composition curriculums are to a large extent dependent upon greater technologization of the classroom. It is digital technology that serves as both an additional mode of construction, but also as a medium through which the multiple modes can be readily accessed. This curricular trend must be positioned within the technologization of higher education in general.

For at least the past 25 years it has been clear that technological advancements, primarily by way of development of computer and later, more advanced digital technologies, would alter global society in irrevocable ways. Educational philosophers and administrators early on accepted and sometimes embraced the notion of incorporating study of computers and computing technologies into formal education at all levels in response to changing marketplace demands. Originally this shift was envisioned as facilitated via the development of computing technologies programs or departments. Eventually the value of computer use in separate disciplines was recognized as beneficial, and so inclusion of computing, now referred to as information and communication technologies (ICT), into disparate curriculums began.

Yet even as computers began to work their way into individual courses and classrooms, the response to digital technologies on the part of educators and administrators was mixed. Some found them to be an interesting addition to their courses. Some used them because of institutional pressures, but found them to be less than essential. Others found them to be inconsequential and their use to be unimportant. A small contingent of Luddites resented and rejected them outright on ideological grounds. There is irony in higher education's lukewarm reception and application of technology in college classrooms. Roach observes that "since the late 1960's and the late 1970's, a cohort of top research universities, largely with U. S. Defense Department funding, developed the technology that would lay the foundation for the internet" (par. 4). Though higher education was instrumental in the development of digital technologies, we have never felt comfortable with their presence in our educational world, much less have we established ownership over even instructional technologies.

Despite the fact that the university in essence gave birth to present day information and communication technologies, once birthed, the baby was set aside for government and business to raise. As a result, the inclusion of information and communication technologies at the college level has been sporadic and inconsistent across institutions, disciplines, and departments. Within programs one might find instructors who utilize digital technologies or not. There may be found instructors who have integrated information and communication technologies into their pedagogies. More frequently you may find departments, and even institutions, advocating for wide-spread instructional use of technologies. The end result remains the same: there is no one story of digital technology's conceptualization, integration, and development within the

confines of the university. Despite the massive growth of technologies worldwide, the university lags behind, in many cases still pondering the use and usefulness of technologies that have been widely accepted and adapted in the broader cultural context.

As befits such a massive topic, with such an inconsistent history, there is much scholarship on the issue. The breadth and variety of the scholarship is in itself a testimony to higher education's inability to commit to a technological relationship that will carry it into the twenty-first century and beyond. Gumport and Chun would attribute this to the dialogic nature of technology and the social and cultural changes that arise from and feed technological innovation, as well as the transient nature of technology itself, observing "in the arena of technology, the event horizon beyond which accurate predictions cannot be made is roughly six months" (392).

In *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-first Century: The Importance of Paying Attention* Cynthia Selfe offers a short history of technology in American education as she attempts to define for the reader exactly what technology literacy is and involves. Her attention to technological literacy casts technology in a new light, moving it from something outside or used as an add-on to education to an integral literacy skill each individual must possess as they attempt to navigate contemporary society. She assesses the responsibilities of each of the societal stakeholders -- business, government, educators, parents, students – as she addresses the larger picture of cultural ideologies and their role in determining and facilitating societal literacies. Selfe as an individual offers the largest body of scholarship on the topic, offering insights ranging from her admonition that we all must pay attention to the technological changes around us and

their implications, to how we might incorporate digital literacies methodologies in classroom practice.

Selfe's admonition that we in higher education 'pay attention' has not gone unheeded. Roach argues that "twenty years of information technology innovation have transformed American higher education" (92). However, Gumport and Chun, while acknowledging that "advancements in information technology and communications technology have made possible approaches to teaching, learning, and research that were previously unimagined", yet go on to observe "while some advancements have been wholeheartedly embraced as valuable educational initiatives, others have been less enthusiastically received" (371).

*From Theory to Classroom Practice*

Throughout *Education/Technology/Power: Educational Computing as a Social Practice,* Bromley & Apple, Eds., various scholars examine the many conflicting ideological forces influencing institutional, instructional and student use of technology and adoption of technological literacy, focusing extensively on classroom power relations. Stone in " Learning to Exercise Power: Computers and Community Development" argues that "clearly, the kind of education and skills needed in our society today includes the ability to use technology –to *use* it as opposed to being manipulated by it or those few who do have the knowledge to use it" (187). Yet in "Using Computers to Connect Across the Cultural Divide" Starkey observes that, despite findings showing that students learn by engaging actively, the vast majority of instruction is traditional lecture format, requiring students to adopt a passive stance in the classroom in response to instructor's active position of power (177). The anthology's primary emphasis on

institutional cultural ideologies and their influence on educational practice and innovation – particularly in regard to technology – illuminates the many institutional problems that arise when the attempt is made to integrate technological literacy, with its ideological implications, into any classroom, curriculum or institution.

And these aforementioned problems are multiple. Cartwright (1999), Donna Rogers (2000), Spodark (2003), Smith & Cohon (2005), Brill (2007) all identify significant challenges to incorporation of information and communication technologies in higher education classrooms. Addressing the disconnect between theory and practice, they each echo observations made by Gumport and Chun (1999), Selfe (1999), Kerr (2001), and others that integration of such technologies is necessary for the university to remain relevant in modern times, but higher education has yet to respond effectively and consistently. The identified causes are diverse, but include ideological positioning; economic concerns; lack of clear vision and leadership; faculty development; and institutional infrastructures, both physical and ideological, that inhibit curricular and institutional innovation. In 1999, Carol Cartwright, then president of Kent State, observed that introduction of new technologies requires a "change in mindset and, ultimately, a change in campus culture" (Cartwright 55).

Certainly, the issue of financial expenditure is a major component in the incorporation of technologies into institutional and disciplinary infrastructures. Funding has been poured into this incorporation, with the later realization that there is and will be no end in sight. Technological investment is large, ongoing, and often difficult to anticipate and calculate due to rapid progression of the science used to develop the technologies. As well, the global marketplace drives technological innovation perhaps

more than any other segment of American and international capital production. Brill and Galloway, citing the T. H. E. Journal, reported in a study of one U.S. university that "with more varied and sophisticated technologies being introduced on a regular basis, the client reported that investments in hardware and software could alone reach as high as $100,000 for one classroom. Other entities have reported figures as high as $175,000 – $300, 000" (95).

The cost of adapting physical infrastructure also figures prominently. It is not only the machines that require constant attention and expenditure, but the facilities that house and individuals who manage the machines as well. Many university professors use facilities that are not new, and therefore not designed in such a way as to facilitate new ways of teaching and learning, but which, in fact, are designed to support and reinforce traditional lecture-style teaching. This situation is changing as new technologies develop. For instance the need for designated computer classrooms has diminished with the advent of WIFI and widespread student use and ownership of laptop computers. These technological advances have mitigated the need for technologically enhanced classroom facilities, though emerging technologies, such as WIFI, themselves pose new financial challenges.

### *Vision and Leadership*

An historical lack of vision when attending to technology in higher education has eroded faith in some quarters that difficulties can be overcome and that technological ecosystems can be successfully maintained and managed. Though one might argue that it is impossible to maintain a clear vision in the face of near constant and wide-ranging technological change, if the university is to remain relevant in contemporary society, it is

imperative that higher education develop visionary leadership. Lack of focus and coherence can be the death knell of innovation of any sort. Because technological innovation is so complex and demands so much ongoing adaptation from so many institutional stakeholders, lack of cohesion, nurturing and institutional guidance can derail technological progress before it begins.

Spodark cites a survey conducted by the Association for History and Computing as stating that "a majority -- 65% -- of the almost 500 professors who responded to the survey called their institutions' technology policies misguided or insufficient" (20). Central to engaging faculty in curricular change that involves technologies is clear vision and leadership. Without administrative and infrastructural preparation, planning, and support, technological innovation is doomed to fail. Spodark identifies lack of clear vision and lack of leadership as two hindrances to attempts to integrate technologies in the classroom (20). However, these are precursors to others problems.

Reticence and outright resistance on the part of faculty is oft cited as the number one problem confronting implementation of technological innovation on college campuses. Haynes, et al (2004), Ma (2004), Rogers, D. ((2000), Rogers, P. (2001), Spodark (2003), Scanzoni (2005), and Ryan et al. (2000) all observe this as a central problem and major obstruction in attempts to integrate ICT in higher education. The reasons for the lack of faculty support for such innovation are numerous. Donna Rogers cites lack of faculty training as leaving instructors unable to integrate technologies into their classrooms and pedagogies (19). Spodark observes that there is a lack of financial incentive or reward for instructors to go above and beyond traditional practices and experiment with technologies (20). Haynes et al. suggest that instructors experience a

level of anxiety and have a lack of understanding as to how technologies might be adapted for use in their pedagogies (154-155).

Although all of these are certainly true, clearly there is a larger picture. ICT has precipitated a fundamental shift in knowledge construction and dissemination. Classroom practice has not widely accommodated this shift as yet. This has as much to do with the nature of teaching and learning and educational practice as it does with technologies themselves. New techno-social paradigms demand new educational paradigms, and these new paradigms, though developed, have not been widely accepted or put into practice as yet. This is not surprising, and when examined within the context of prior attempts at curricular reform it seems clear that the challenges facing institutions wishing to advance multimodal composition curriculums are significant and as multiple as the modalities themselves.

## Moving Forward

As we academics continue to negotiate our role in higher education, walking the tightrope between the ideological forces within our institutions that sometimes seek to rank and divide, and our own concerns as educators who are trusted to prepare individuals for full and equal participation in society, we must consider and respond to the changing face of human knowledge making and transmission. This directly impacts upon the work of those engaged in composition studies. Neuwirth cites DeVoss, Johansen, Selfe and Williams as urging that

> English composition teachers and programs must address an increasing broad range of literacies if we are to avoid declining relevance of our curricula for our students and abdicating our professional responsibility to

> describe the ways in which people are now communicating and making meaning. These authors call for us to expand our professional, curricular, and instructional activities to include interpreting and creating multimedia compositions… (188).

Yet Selfe observes in "Students Who Teach Us", the second chapter in *Writing New Media,* that "few composition programs around the country have integrated systematic attention to – and instruction in the composition of – new media texts in their curricula at all levels of study" (56).

This mandate to address multimedia composition can only be met through institution-wide advancement. This innovation challenges and will continue to challenge institutional ideologies, hierarchies and structures. Clearly the challenges posed to institutions are necessary in order for these same institutions to remain relevant in and for contemporary society. We can see a richer, more integrated future before us; however, advocating for philosophical and curricular change is not the same as enacting it. We are seeing more and more attention paid to new media and multimodal text construction at the post-secondary level. What we do not have, as yet, is any sort of guide for those programs, departments, and institutions wishing to cross over. A study of Miami University's Digital Writing Collaborative offers the opportunity to examine the process involved in developing ideological and institutional consensus necessary to implement such groundbreaking curriculum.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University in order to determine their process of institutional consensus building in support of including digital writing as a part of the first-year composition curriculum. A primary objective was to identify successful strategies for furthering the formal institutional inclusion of critical multimodal composition practice into higher education first-year writing curricula, though certainly it can be expected that the strategies implemented at Miami University might be utilized to further innovative curricular agendas other than those involving multimodality. Yet, multimodality and the use of digital mediums to construct text certainly pose unique challenges that will also be addressed in this study. This being the case, this study, though it may have wider applications, examines the process of institutional consensus building that took place at Miami University in order to successfully implement a digital, nee multimodal, writing curriculum as a part of first-year composition.

Implementation of multimodal teaching objectives and practices has been explored by Anderson, et al. through a 2005 CCCC research grant funded survey examining integration of multimodality into composition curricula. In 2006 Anderson, et al. followed up this survey with an article analyzing the survey methodology and results. This survey and the accompanying analysis shed light on a number of issues, from theoretical grounding to faculty development practices. Most notable for my purposes is the finding on the part of the researchers that "as we hypothesized, the majority of multimodal composition was occurring at the individual level and not necessarily in program-wide efforts…" (69).

Curricular innovation on a wide scale must have significant institutional support in order to succeed in the long term. Nespor cites Barrone in labeling innovation on only an individual instructional level as "a boutique or Lone Ranger approach", explaining the lack of efficacy that accompanies this approach by asserting that "such efforts do not scale and are not sustainable because each is dependent on its creator"(54). Nespor goes on to warn that "although not rejected outright, Lone Ranger approaches are considered insufficient as an organizational strategy…"(54).

Multimodal composition as a formal disciplinary practice must extend beyond individual instructors' pedagogies and instead must evolve out of the larger institution. This is no small undertaking. Birnbaum observes that "the importance of organizational goals is their presumed effect on individual and group behavior. But even the sharing of goals does not necessarily mean that people will agree either on which goals should be optimized or on how to optimize them" (62). Implementation of multimodal composition on a curricular level demands a change, not only in method, but in institutional culture and ideology – or perhaps it is more apropos to say a realignment of institutional ideologies, in an effort to support and facilitate the innovation. Though the CCCC survey identifies the majority of advancement in multimodal composition pedagogy as taking place on an individual basis, Miami University has implemented multimodal, or as they refer to it, digital composition, on an institutional scale.

## Study Rationale

In 2005 Miami University's College Composition program organized a Digital Writing Collaborative to spearhead the development of a multimodal first-year composition curriculum, resulting in the creation of a designated digital writing

curriculum and first-year course of the same name. This course option has been expanded over the past several years; at present approximately 30 % of composition sections classified as Digital Writing sections. The curriculum is now institutionally entrenched. This level of curricular innovation is unique.

Though there are a number of institutions that utilize computers in the teaching of writing, there is a significant shift in thought and practice from utilizing computers as a tool or medium for instruction, and utilizing computers as a modality and medium of transmission for other modalities. Within composition studies there is now a movement away from the use of computers as a mere medium, and instead focusing on the representation of knowledge through the use of multiple modes, including the digital – what I have deemed Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy (CMCP).

After searching for multimodal composition programs nationwide via internet searches, searches through scholarly databases and articles, and emailing significant scholars in the field who might be expected to be familiar with such programs (for example, Andrea Lunsford and Cynthia Selfe), I discovered that there were very few programs with formalized multimodal components, and fewer still that had extensive or exclusively multimodal first-year composition programs. Some programs incorporated multimodal composing as an assignment within traditional freshmen writing courses. Some institutions offered multimodal composition courses beginning at the sophomore level and up. Some institutions offered multimodal composition courses that were specific to an individual instructor or small group of instructors. There were many programs who utilized computers in composition. However, there has been minimal

formal institutionalization of Critical Multimodal Composition Pedagogy on a wide scale nationwide.

One program that does have a formalized multimodal component, Ohio State University, is addressing multimodal composing practices within the confines of traditional, alphabetic-based literacy instruction by integrating multimodal composition practice as a part of a traditional freshman composition curriculum. Miami University on the other hand has developed a dual freshman composition program, offering students the option of taking a traditional freshman composition course or Digital Writing. Their digital composition courses fully incorporate multimodal composition practices and pedagogy. My search resulted in the discovery of no other formalized multimodal freshman composition curriculums; it is possible that there are other programs meeting the study criteria that I was simply unable to uncover during my search process.

Though the members of Miami University's Digital Writing Collaborative have prepared an as yet unpublished chapter delineating their pedagogical and curricular practice, they have only addressed on a limited basis the institutional consensus-building strategies that had to have occurred in order for the larger institution to have supported curricular change of this magnitude. It is on this process of institutional consensus building in support of the development of multimodal composition that this dissertation focuses. My research examines Miami University's process of institutional ideological alignment and consensus building in order to describe and create a profile of programmatic innovation. This model may then be made available to other programs wishing to advance their own multimodal curriculums, or, for that matter, programs wishing to advance any innovative curriculum on an institutional level.

## Case Study Methodology

Clearly, institutional beliefs, values, and practices facilitate the success or failure of curricular innovation. Through engaging in an explanatory case study, I hope to develop a greater understanding of the institutional and associated ideological infrastructures that have supported implementation of multimodal composition pedagogy in Miami University's first-year composition program, and furthermore, illustrate the transformative practices that allow for sustainability of this curricular innovation. Hamel, Dufour and Fortin observe, "the case study has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that must characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining….This study is considered to be a superior method of description, and the choices and tactics that define it also precisely define the process of transformation from local to global" (39). The explanatory case study is an appropriate methodology for this particular study for a number of reasons.

My primary objective is to examine how and why a certain institution, Miami University, has been successful in implementing multimodal composition pedagogy in their first-year writing curriculum. Yin observes that "how and why questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies" (6). Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg state, "The advantage of case studies…is that researchers who utilize them can deal with the reality behind appearances, with contradictions and the dialectical nature of social life, as well as with a whole that is more than the sum of its parts" (39). The case study format allows for a contextual exploration and provides the opportunity to describe how a specific institution achieved this curricular innovation. Additionally, the case study

provides a context from which to explain and illustrate why they were able to successfully implement this innovation.

Case study methodology focuses on the specific actors within a system or institution and explores their perceptions of themselves and each other. Nespor argues that too often research involving practice and pedagogy at the university level ends up focusing on what he refers to as "sectioned-out experiences", or what I would term de-contextualized fragments (4). He instead urges that research explore

> The political contexts that drive (or inhibit) particular pedagogical agendas, the assumptions about knowledge and teaching that shape course materials and guide how technical artifacts are glued into instructional configurations, … the kinds of futures or everyday activities to which faculty are trying to connect instruction, the processes through which decisions are made about the equipment provided to faculty…. (4)

Case study methodology provides the opportunity for the researcher to explore the research subject within a specific context, and perhaps more importantly, provides for an examination of the various components and actors involved in the process being studied. This makes possible an integrated profile of the study subject, rather than the de-contextualized fragment referred to earlier. Gerring succinctly observes that "the product of a good case study is insight" (7) and further notes the "'lightbulb' moments arise from a close engagement with the particular facts of a particular case" (40). The explanatory single-case study format allows for the stated close engagement, and in this circumstance did indeed produce the intended 'lightbulb' moments.

The full range of evidence collected and evidence gathering techniques associated with case study research, such as interviews, observations, collection of documents and artifacts, audiotaping, videotaping, and archival exploration, facilitate the analysis of institutional context, including an analysis of the deeply embedded values and beliefs influencing institutional practice. Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg note that,

> The case study provides a clear advantage over other methods of investigation. Although the case study must rely on a good deal of judgment, exercised by the observer, the great strength of this form of research is that it does permit the observer to assemble complementary and overlapping measures of the same phenomena. Thus, a researcher …usually has at his or her disposal a variety of data sources that can be called upon to assess the nature of particular events, as well as the motives and interests of actors. (19)

As well, an objective when using case study design can be to generalize from the specific case or cases to a wider theoretical observation. This serves my purposes, as it is my intention as a result of this research to reveal factors contributing to the success of the study participants and by extension suggest a path that other institutions and programs might follow in an effort to enact their own multimodal composition curriculum. To the extent that I found Miami University's process of institutional ideological alignment successful – and wish to highlight their practices as a model, this study is not only explanatory, but also an advocacy study of sorts. I seek not only to identify how and why they undertook the actions that lead to the successful implementation of the multimodal first-year composition curriculum, but also to point out their success in doing so.

*Limitations of the Case Study Format*

Stevenson notes that there have been concerns voiced about the validity of case study research as a methodology, regarding such issues as lack of scientific generalizability, a focus on atheoretical descriptions, and idealistic assessment of so-called successful practices (40). Though I did, indeed, discover that the Miami University curricular innovation has been successfully implemented, and therefore has the potential to serve as a model, I did not go into the research study expecting to find the level of success I discovered. I do not consider my reporting of the success to be 'idealistic". On the contrary, I consider it to be accurate. Had I discovered a lack of success, I would have reported that in my findings. I do, in fact, address challenges and issues of sustainability in the final chapter of this dissertation.

It is to be expected that researchers will choose study sites that are exemplary in some way, either as examples of more successful practice or as examples of less-successful practice. Reporting on successful practice when it is found to be the case is an appropriate action for a researcher, and vice versa. However, the success of case study research relies upon the evaluation of the study subject by the researcher. The researcher is supposed to remain 'objective'. Yet, objectivity is, paradoxically, subjective. All individual researchers approach their subjects from ideological positioning specific to that individual. This renders their observations, even of numerical data, subjective. But subjective does not mean inferior. Popkewitz cites Scriven in pointing out that "the merits of judgments provided by instruments may, at any one time, not be as adequate as the judgments of a human observer" (*Paradigm* 21). The researcher's responsibility is to recognize his/her own bias' prior to engaging in the study and work consciously to be

self-reflective throughout the study in order to ensure that they do not represent the study subject inaccurately.

For all of the discussion of the merit of case-study research, Kyburz-Graber observes that “case studies are increasingly being used in educational research intended to describe context-specific educational situations and to draw conclusions by generalizing from the findings” (53). She explains this interest in case study research as arising out of a “philosophy of analyzing an existing, real-life situation in all its complexity, exploring it as close to the people concerned as possible, describing the situation in as much detail as possible, and finally explaining the findings in a clear and comprehensible way” (54). Stevenson, citing Wadsworth and Merriam, finds that case studies “involve data collected over time to illuminate, for example, how a process of introducing, developing, implementing a particular initiative was enacted or evolved, or how a change has taken place” (41). He also notes that

> Case studies enable in-depth information to be revealed about the specific context as well as the intentions, organization and process surrounding, for example, the implementation of an innovative policy change, educational program or activity, usually by focusing on the unique understandings and experiences of the individuals involved. (43)

The case-study was an appropriate research methodology for this study, as it is a study of the implementation of an educational program, whose process of implementation, I find to a large extent to be generalizable.

There are limitations to this study notwithstanding. For instance, my scope was limited to the USA for a variety of reasons. Firstly, financial considerations demanded

that all potential study sites be located in mainland USA. Secondly, the USA has not implemented multiliteracies pedagogy on a wide scale, particularly at the post-secondary level. Additionally, my target audience is primarily comprised of scholars working in the US, including those at my home institution – where we hope to establish a multimodal composition program at some point in the future. As such, examining a stateside institution or institutions seemed the most appropriate choice.

Additionally, though I met with a large number of faculty and staff at Miami University, there were other with whom I had hoped to meet, but was unable for a variety of reasons. Some individuals simply did not want to participate in this study. Others could not arrange the time to meet with me during my visits. I do not feel that this has negatively impacted upon my research or findings.

I had also hoped to obtain access to a Master's thesis written by a former member of the DWC that examined Miami University English Department graduate students' perceptions of the DWC and digital writing program. Despite several efforts to secure this document, I was unable to obtain access to it. I expect that the author was reluctant to share her findings prior to her own research being published. Though I would have liked to have had her research available to me as a sort of crosscheck, I feel that my research findings are accurate as a result of the structure of my research process.

However, I consider my participants' responses to be reliable for several reasons. The participants were not given the questions in advance. As a result, the responses were extemporaneous and unplanned. As well, there was significant repetition of responses and themes throughout the interviews. The participants were a combination of faculty, graduate assistants and administrators. Some had never met one another before. Those who had met, had

not had opportunity to compare questions or formulate pre-considered responses. The repetition was so significant that it became apparent during interviews even before the interviewing process was completed. Though each interview was digitally recorded, I was able to note repeated themes as they manifested during the course of the interviews and took notes as I processed the interviews as they were being recorded. In addition, participants did not hesitate to respond to questions regarding resistance or challenges. Again, the responses were repeated throughout the interviews and regardless of stakeholder position. As such, I consider the data received to be reliable.

## Background

There have been prior studies and articles published addressing the infrastructural issues facing those who would pursue curricular innovation utilizing digital technologies. DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill chronicled Cushman's efforts to institute a multimodal course at Michigan State University. The focus of their study involved primarily the infrastructural failures that impeded Cushman's success. Though identifying infrastructural failures as the result of political and ideological positioning, and therefore not the issue in and of themselves, DeVoss, Cushman and Grabill stopped short of an analysis of ideology and its impact upon curricular innovation, specifically curricular application of multimodal composition pedagogy. Their discussion of infrastructure was specific to facilities and support, and it related primarily to individual instructors and their attempts to integrate multimodal text construction into their composition courses.

Additionally, the CCCC study conducted by Anderson, et al., though broad and far-reaching, primarily assessed instructional practices and pedagogical influences. They, as well, did not analyze infrastructural success or failure, nor possible reasons for either,

though they did examine levels of institutional support for those practicing multimodal composition pedagogy. Full analysis of ideological positioning and institutional infrastructures was clearly not within the scope of their research.

Nespor offers the most appropriate model for the present study. His single-site case study chronicles and analyzes institutional ideologies and their influence on integration of educational, informational and communication technologies across the curriculum at Virginia Tech in the 1990's. His study clearly identifies concerns and questions that are directly related to and offer a precursor for this study. In his study of the advancement of computer mediated instruction at Virginia Tech, he explores such issues as how individual developers coordinate with university agendas, what might be the influence of institutional structures on curricular innovation, and what other forces, state, national, economic, and/or political, might influence curricular outcomes (5). He advises that his objective is to describe and characterize, not prescribe.

This objective is mine as well. Through the study of Miami University's successful Digital Writing program I hope to offer, not so much explicit directions, but rather a guide for others to use as they chart their way to incorporating multimodal composition pedagogy into first-year writing curricula.

## Objectives

My research examines a combination of concerns and employs a range of questions. Though the study design and interview questions were emergent by necessity, I identified a selection of exploratory interview questions that assisted me in answering my larger research questions. Though study has been done by Anderson, et al., and DeVoss, et al, assessing such matters as textbooks, technology requirements, software,

and the like, my interest goes to what I consider to be larger institutional issues that might make or break curricular reform attempts.

Fundamental to the success of any reform are the ideological underpinnings of the institution. Nespor cites Bowker and Star in urging that "new infrastructures develop on top of old ones and inherit many of their characteristics….Organizational change is less about dissemination than moving around and building organizational bases" (18-19).

My primary research question was: how was institutional consensus developed in support of the implementation of Miami University's multimodal first-year composition curriculum?

Specifically I looked to determine:

- What organizational bases pre-existed or needed to be constructed on an institutional level in order to support the inclusion of multimodal composition in first-year composition curriculum.
- Was there an ideological infrastructure pre-existing that worked to facilitate this curricular innovation? And if so, how was it engaged?
- If not, how was the ideological infrastructure constructed or designed to support MCP?
- What programmatic and institutional beliefs and values were in place that enabled this curricular innovation?
- Were there institutional and programmatic beliefs and values weren't in place and needed to be?
- How did the new ideological positioning, if there was a need for it, occur? How were ideological differences mediated?

- Were the existing institutional ideologies in alignment with MCP ideologies? Were they in opposition? Did they coexist? Has the curricular implementation been perceived of and/or utilized as a means to challenge institutional and/or cultural ideologies?
- How many institutional stakeholders needed to be on board in order for the innovation to proceed? Who were they? Were there specific stakeholders without whose support the innovation would have failed?

The answers to these questions should provide a map for future programmatic implementation of MCP.

## Study Site Criteria

Miami University was identified as the primary study site because of several factors. Firstly, I wished to examine only programs that had been successful in incorporating multimodal composition pedagogy into their programs. By successful, I refer to programs that proceeded with the curricular innovation in a way that was institutionally sanctioned and promoted, meaning that MCP has been included as a part of the foundational structure of the program, manifested by funding, facilities, and resource allocation. I was interested in programs that manifested institutional sanction by offering multiple sections of multimodal composition taught by a variety of instructors, or at the very least more than one instructor. Miami University fits these criteria. Their Digital Writing program has been institutionally developed and sanctioned. It has been supported with institutional funding and infrastructural support. The program has had measurable success as manifested by their expanding course offerings taught by multiple instructors, popularity with students, and ongoing institutional support.

Additionally, I was only interested in examining application of the pedagogy within first-year composition courses or their equivalent. Though it is clear that there has been significant formal application of multimodal composition practice in professional, business, technical, and upper level courses at a variety of institutions in the U.S., first-year composition is the gateway course designed to inculcate students in the conventions of academic discourse. It provides the discursive foundation for communication throughout the Academy and through which students will participate over the course of their college careers. Freshman composition is the gateway through which most college students pass as they make their way through higher education in America. It is a seminal experience in the life of a college student. Freshman composition establishes the foundation for all interaction within the Academy from that time forward. As such, it is central to the development of academic discourse patterns and practices, not only for students, but for the instructors who teach them and rely on freshman composition courses to teach students basic academic communication tools, as well as critical thinking skills.

Miami University has no significant history of curricular advancement of multimodal composition. Their attempts to integrate multimodal literacy practice into the curriculum have been limited to only one writing course other than the current first-year offerings of Digital Writing. This fact is significant. At Miami University multimodal composition has always been conceived of and advanced as a first-year composition course. Though OSU, for instance, has incorporated a multimodal component into their traditional freshman composition courses, they have widespread use of multimodality throughout their writing and English curriculum, as well as in disparate other

curriculums. The advent of multimodality in first-year writing came at the end of their process, not at the beginning. Multimodality trickled down into their first-year writing curriculum; it was not initially conceived of as an academic literacy skill for first-year students.

Miami University has determined to begin with first-year writing. Application of this pedagogy in first-year programs might well facilitate the spread of multimodal compositional practices throughout upper level programs and across disciplines, both at Miami University (where, in fact, it has already begun to filter out) and other institutions. Because an objective of this study is the identification of factors that facilitate the advancement of multimodal composition pedagogy, first-year composition courses are the obvious center from which this institutional innovation might proceed and are the most appropriate focus of this study.

I am also interested in the application of the pedagogy at a four-year research institution over two-year, technical, or for-profit institutions. It is often the case that larger, four-year institutions are looked upon as leaders in innovative practices and curricular reform. As such, the institution serving as study subject may serve as a model for implementing this curricular innovation throughout American higher education.

In order to discover what programs might be implementing multimodal components into their first-year composition courses, I engaged in a fact finding mission. I first searched databases for scholarly articles or studies that might provide leads. As a result I learned about the efforts of DeVoss, et al at Michigan State. This search also highlighted innovators in the field and led me to email these scholars, such as Cindy Selfe at OSU and Andrea Lunsford at Stanford, in an effort to gather information from them

regarding institutions that might be formally incorporating multimodal practices as a part of first-year composition. Additionally, I searched the internet, looking at composition program websites in order to see if I could find any specifically addressing multimodality as a departmental practice. It was the Miami University Digital Writing Collaborative's website that first led me to them. My search yielded information on a few programs that were formally, institutionally promoting multimodal composing in first-year composition.

In the case of this study, the specific criteria applied narrowed the field of study subject to Miami University and Ohio State University. OSU's implementation of multimodal composition has taken place as a component within traditional freshman composition courses. Though this approach is certainly a viable one, my interest is in significant curricular innovation that shifts the focus of literacy education away from monomodal practice to one that fully articulates literacy as multimodal. OSU also has a history of technological innovation to which many, if not most, other institutions may not lay claim.

Miami University is a four-year institution, but also one whose position regarding technologies in composition is more in line with the majority of institutions that might be interested in attempting this curricular innovation. Additionally, Miami University also has a history of curricular innovation and leadership within the field; in the 80's they added significantly to the disciplinary discussion of sentence combining. Acting once again as a leader in the discipline, Miami University's digital writing program offers the most pertinent model for other institutions.

In this sense the methodology altered somewhat from what I originally envisioned. Initially I expected the study to be a multi-case study, including several study

sites. The initial decision to study several sites was problematic for logistical reasons even before discovering that I could only identify one case that satisfied my study criteria. Gerring observes that "the collection of original data is typically more difficult in cross-case analysis than incase study analysis, involving greater expense, greater difficulties in identifying and coding cases, learning foreign languages, traveling, and so forth. Whatever can be done for a set of cases can usually be done more easily for a single case" (59). However, limiting the focus of the study to a single site does not compromise the value of the study. It has, instead, allowed me to engage deeply with the participants and focus more intensively on the specifics of the particular site. Gerring also notes "one of the primary virtues of the case study method is the depth of analysis that it offers….Case studies are thus rightly identified with 'holistic' analysis" (49). Though working with a single case may limit the scope of the study, it offers the benefit of greater depth, and is an acceptable methodology for the purposes of this study.

## Process and Procedures

In late summer 2007 I contacted Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson via email at Miami University. Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson was the Director of College Composition at Miami University and is a leader within Miami University's Digital Writing Collaborative. Later I spoke with Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson by phone, explained my study, and confirmed that the Miami University program met the study criteria. I then informally asked her if she would be interested in participating in the study. She responded in the affirmative. Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson offered to make initial contact with other faculty members involved with the Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University. We established via email that I would contact her to set up a site visit and establish contact with other members of the collaborative at a later date.

After obtaining IRB approval from both IUP and Miami University I set a date for an initial site visit in order to observe and begin interviewing members of the Digital Writing Collaborative and other faculty, staff and administrators who might have been influential in the formation of the DWC. My first site visit took place from March 24-28, 2008. I conducted a second site visit from May 5-7 2008.

Once I had IRB approvals and set a date for a site-visit, I made contact with members of the collaborative and institutional stakeholders at Miami University via email. During the first site visit I met with Cynthia Leweicki-Wilson; Jason Palmeri, currently Coordinator of the Digital Writing Collaborative; Glenn Platt, Director of Integrated Media Studies Program; Carolyn Gard, Senior Director of Academic Technologies Services; Michele Polak, an instructor in and founding member of the DWC; and Paul Anderson, Director of the Howe Center for Writing Excellence. In addition I observed Michele Polak's English 111: Digital Writing course. During the second site visit I interviewed Heidi McKee, original Coordinator of the Digital Writing Collaborative (she was out on maternity leave during the spring 08 semester); Denise Landrum and Abby Dubisar, both instructors and founding members of the DWC; Keith Tuma, Chair of the English Department; and Dick Pettitt, Associate Provost.

"Jorgensen (1989) talks about 'snowball sampling': starting with one situation and using your developing knowledge of it to identify other situations that are similar" (qtd. in Johnstone 92). Johnstone observes that, "this technique is useful when the relevant categories of analysis are not initially apparent" (92). Additional stakeholders within the institution who also ought to have been considered as a part of the study were revealed during the course of conducting initial interviews. These additional stakeholders included individuals who participated in the implementation of multimodal curriculum or were involved in aligning infrastructure to support

the curricular innovation. As well, after determining dates for a site visit, Dr. Lewiecki-Wilson posted a notice regarding my study, and inviting participation, on the DWC website. DWC instructors Michele Polak, Abby Dubisar and Denise Landrum responded to this invitation. After my initial interviews, I identified additional participants who I invited to participate in the study, including Dick Pettitt, an Associate Provost. Neither Heidi McKee nor Keith Tuma were available during my first site visit because both were either on leave or sabbatical. They both made themselves available during the later site visit.

In advance of both site visits I sent participants copies of the informed consent letter for them to consider. Once on site I asked each participant to sign an informed consent form prior to beginning their interview. I also asked each participant if they had any questions about the project and if they agreed to be audiotaped during the interview. All participants signed consent forms and agreed to be audiotaped. Several participants had questions regarding the focus and methodology of the study. I answered any questions as they arose. These questions were not of a serious nature and posed no problem to the study. They were solely matters of clarification and curiosity, such as “how many sites was I considering?” and “was I hoping to do this at my institution?” During my interviews I also determined that all of my study participants were willing to answer any follow-up questions I may have via email or by phone. No further interviewing or questions have been necessary. Each participant has had the opportunity to review transcripts of their interview and amend or delete statements that they did not wish to be included as a part of the study. Participants were also given the opportunity to vet chapters that pertained to them and included information derived from their interviews.

During my site visits I used qualitative methods of data collection, including interviews, collection and analysis of artifacts and documents, observations and field notes. The interview

strategy I used might best be described as “qualitative evaluation interviews” where “the researcher learns in depth and detail how those involved view the successes and failures of a program or project” (Rubin & Rubin 6). These interviews were semi-formal in format. I had a list of pre-determined questions, but I also felt free to pursue additional questions arising from the responses of the interview participants (probing). My questions, though similar, varied depending upon the role of the stakeholder being interviewed. For instance, were they stakeholders who brought -- or were brought – to the innovation?

The interviews varied in length from approximately ½ to 1 hour. In the end, I personally interviewed eleven members of the Miami University community. Two of these, central figures Heidi McKee and Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, I interviewed twice. Additionally, I submitted questions to the college President and Provost via email. Both offered responses to an abbreviated list of questions. I abbreviated the list of questions for these two individuals because, firstly, they were very busy and I was loath to take up significant amounts of time, lest they refuse my request. As well, I emailed them after I had conducted all of my face-to-face interviews, and I had very specific questions that I looked to have answered.

I also requested that I be allowed to read a Master’s Thesis written by one of the original members of the DWC, Kristen Moore. This study was a confidential survey of graduate students and was designed to gauge their feelings about and response to the DWC and digital writing. Though Ms. Moore initially agreed to allow me to use the document for my study, she did not furnish it, and it was not available through any other avenues.

During my first on-site interviews I set out to discern the following.

- How did the Digital Writing Collaborative come into being? What is the team's story?

- What was the process of designing the digital writing courses? What was the institutional motivation/rationale behind the curricular change?
- Were there specific stakeholders without whose support the innovation would have failed? Why?
- Was there a process of "selling" the pedagogy? Did this entail use of demonstrations, artifacts, pilot programs, etc?
- What language was developed to articulate the pedagogy and the value of the pedagogy to outsiders? What was the process of articulation? How was this language represented in document, artifacts, etc?
- How was departmental and institutional ideological coherence achieved? How were other members of the institutional community brought on board?
- How were faculty and institutional development achieved? What incentives and institutional support were offered? Was there recognition or remuneration involved?
- What challenges arose during the process of implementation and how were they resolved? How were ideological and/or disciplinary differences mediated?

My strategy was to ask participants to tell the story of their participation in the formation of the DWC. This was the first question posed to every participant. In addition, if they did not speak to these issues during the telling of their stories, I also asked them to: recount any significant challenges faced in attempting to institute the DWC, describe any resistance to the DWC and digital writing initiative encountered or observed, name anyone they felt was instrumental to the DWC coming to fruition, identify key reasons for the successful implementation of the DWC and digital writing curriculum, and discuss what they deemed the

greatest challenges to sustainability. All of the respondents were more than forthcoming during the course of their interviews. They provided vast amounts of information and actually needed very little prodding or probing from me. These individuals were interested in recounting their stories for me, and spoke freely about such difficult issues as institutional resistance and challenges to sustainability.

In order to more fully examine and describe the complexities of the institutional structures that led to the successful implementation of the pedagogy, I also observed a class in order to observe multimodal composition pedagogy in action. This classroom observation was not recorded. Though I did not interview students or make them and their processes the subject of observation, I do believe that multimodal composition pedagogy and accompanying institutional ideologies are certainly reflected in individual instructors' classroom practice and the classroom infrastructure itself. Observation of classroom practice and process did in fact shed light on ideological, facilities and funding infrastructures, and served to provide examples of themes stated during the interview process.

Additionally I collected documents and artifacts, such as manuals, training materials, reports, P.R. materials, webpages, grant requests, etc. The use of interviews, observations and collection of documents provided triangulation of data collection methodology.

### *The Role of the Researcher*

Denzin and Lincoln urge "something of a contract exists between researcher and the researched, a disclosing and protective covenant, usually informal, but best not silent – a moral obligation" (154). However, Nespor observes that "qualitative studies are known for dissatisfying the people about whom they are written" (xi). He cites Becker as stating "the

sociological view of the world-abstract, relativistic, generalizing-necessarily deflates people's view of themselves and their organizations" (xi). Rubin and Rubin identify a middle ground between these two considerations: "Your conversational partners should see themselves in your descriptions, although they may not agree with every detail" (91). In the case of this study, the participants have had the opportunity to re-examine statements made during initial and/or subsequent interviews and offer corrections or amendments as they deemed fit; though in the end**,** "the researcher decides what the case's *own* story is" (Denzin and Lincoln144).

The specific focus and structure of the study frames the story. The researcher is responsible for creating this frame. Like an artist observing a landscape, the researcher provides an interpretation of that which he views. The researcher does not provide a panoramic photograph -- though even the photographer's eye for composition influences a photo as it is generated. Objectivity, paradoxically, is relative. Indeed, it may be that perceived objectivity is not so much the issue as is the dynamic that exists between insider and outsider perspectives.

The best the outside observer can offer is trustworthiness through full disclosure and preservation of the ability of insiders or participants to individually influence the story's telling through the articulation of their experiences. I am committed to preserving the participants' ability to shape their story through my articulation of their experiences in the dissertation. As an outsider with a shared interest in the curricular innovation being studied, I observe from a position that is seemingly more objective than the insider's, yet that is a more informed and engaged position than an outsider's. I approach the study with both an agenda *and* curiosity.

My agenda is clearly stated: to facilitate the spread of this pedagogy by way of examining those who have succeeded on an institutional and programmatic level. My biases are in line with those who initially theorized the pedagogy: an interest in generating greater agency on the

part of students and individuals, an interest in multiliteracies pedagogy as a democratizing force, an interest in engaging the ideologies that inhibit the aforementioned. The study subjects are embroiled within the ideological structure. Despite observing from outside of those structures, the researcher, nonetheless, must fully acknowledge her own ideological baggage. Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg observe that,

> The researcher is a variable in the research design – not just in the statement of the problem, but also in the collection and analysis of data. Consequently, the only way some form of objectivity can be sustained is through critical self-reflection, through recognition that one's research results may well be shaped by one's position in the power structure and by the ideological context within which one carries out scientific activities. (36)

My curiosity involves learning what I do not know but need to know. It is this recognition and acknowledgement of *what I do not know but need to know* that lends objectivity and justifies my role as outside facilitator of the story's unfolding.

### *Data Analysis*

As I proceeded through the study I processed data using a variety of techniques, including keeping a field or process journal documenting my experiences as a researcher and my interaction with participants and data, reviewing notes and transcription of interviews, writing summaries of the interviews, noting or listing themes as they became apparent to me, and, finally, data coding. This process of analysis allowed me to providing thick description of the study subject in the final research report as well as cross-check my own observations as researcher.

Prior to on-site visits I conducted a thorough review of the pertinent literature, including that literature, digital or print, specific to the program and institution. This deep understanding of the study subject helped prepare me to immediately engage the subject and study at hand, without necessitating an acclimation period. This also facilitated my being perceived as trustworthy by the study participants, in as much as the subjects felt that they were "known" and recognized that I had prepared professionally and had extensive knowledge of the program and institution prior to their interviews. This prior knowledge also allowed me to discern to some extent the veracity of participants statements as they were being interviewed. It also allowed me to cross-reference information internally as interviews were being conducted. This background information also helped me develop additional questions or prompts during interviews. My knowledge of and reference to institutional structures and stakeholders also allowed me to voice them as acknowledgement during interviews and form solidarity with the participants.

My process of data analysis involved first a review of the audiofiles. I listened to the files and took copious notes, both covering the actual content of the interviews, and also including my observations and reflections as I listened to the recordings. The process of reviewing the files was lengthy, approximately 2-3 hours per recording, and longer for exceptionally long recordings. Immediately following this process I sent out the files to be professionally transcribed. Once I completed this process, I made notes of recurring themes and points and compared this to the notes I had made during the actual interviews and site-visits. I then began to organize my themes into a flow chart. Once I had basic designations, I began to code my informal transcripts or notes. I first looked for themes

already noted in my flow chart. I also looked for any themes or points that I may have missed. I then reviewed my coded notes in order to discern for certain that I had appropriate documentation for my findings. It is from this flow chart and my coded transcriptions that chapters 4-6 arise.

## Presentation of Data

I observed three major categories of data. The first is data that addresses previously identified challenges when implementing innovative curricula, particularly curricula involving technologies. The second category of data that emerged involved strategies or practices that were unrelated to challenges identified previously in the literature on the subject, and that were specific to Miami University and its stakeholders. A third category of data that I identified involved resistance to the curricular innovation and challenges to sustainability, both specific to Miami University but also generalizable to other institutions. Finally I identified what I considered to be the most significant lessons to be taken from the experiences of the stakeholders at Miami University. My objective in this study is to document these themes, not specific individual's narratives. The following chapters will therefore be organized thematically around these four categories of data.

To say that the acceptance and application of multimodal composition is something of a watershed moment in higher education may sound hyperbolic, yet I believe it to be true. The pedagogy demands a drastic ideological shift on the part of the greater institution of higher education in America, not to mention a long-term, large scale economic commitment from individual institutions. Those who are at the forefront have much to teach the rest of the composition community. It is for this reason, as well as my

own desire to begin instituting such changes at my own institution and in my own composition classroom, that I wished to study how Miami University is meeting this challenge and implementing a multimodal first-year composition curriculum.

The chapters that follow will examine the ways in which the faculty at Miami University worked to build institutional consensus in order to overcome obstacles facing the implementation of curricular change, both previously documented obstacles, as well as others specific to the institution. I will also discuss what challenges to sustainability remain at issue. I will conclude with a summary of successful practices that were engaged at Miami University that facilitated institutional support, as well as provide a list of recommendations for programs attempting this or other curricular innovations.

# CHAPTER 4: BUILDING CONSENSUS BY ENGAGING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURES

Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson in describing Miami University's background relationship with technology recounts a time in the mid-80's when the English department had a computer lab up and running. She describes how after a few years the lab fell into disuse and was eventually abandoned. The reasons for this were multiple, but included a failure on the part of both faculty and the institution at large to adapt pedagogically to the technology that was made available, combined with institutional resistance to committing to ongoing spending in order to support the lab space and accompanying technologies. In response to her story I asked her when the facility became valued and refunded again. Her response was that "it never became valued again". In fact, it wasn't until more than 10 years later that the institution re-committed itself to expending resources to improve the technologies on campus, and perhaps more importantly, began actively encouraging the pedagogical adoption of advanced instructional technologies across disciplines.

This is not an unusual story. Most of us in higher education could recount one that is similar. As well, the scholarship on instructional technologies in higher education suggests that this is actually a familiar story. There is a comfort in this I believe. Miami University, despite its prestige, rank and resources, isn't so unlike most of us in academia. Most of us have struggled with application of technologies in our classrooms, and even more so with pedagogies that take these technologies into account and capitalize upon them rather than ignoring them.

All the more reason to observe what Miami University has been able to accomplish in the past two years with their digital writing program. Central to their ability to deal with institutional challenges has been their ability to develop institutional consensus and engage institutional supports. The Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University has faced and dealt with resistance. They've examined plans for sustainability and challenges to those plans for sustainability. Though by no means offering us a fool-proof plan, Miami University's experiences offer those of us in higher education interested in multimodal composition a lesson in how to develop a plan for curricular innovation – in this case implementation of multimodal composition and the institution of multiliteracies pedagogy - , meet resistance, engage existing infrastructures, and develop a plan for long-term institutional sustainability. Each of these is predicated upon the development of institutional consensus behind the curricular innovation.

Though this study addresses these issues specifically within the context of the digital writing initiative at Miami University and implementation of a first-year multimodal composition curriculum, there is potential for broader application. The lessons learned from Miami University's experiences will also serve to inform those interested in curricular innovation in general and/or those interested in implementation of instructional technologies in higher education.

In order to understand how Miami University's Digital Writing Collaborative met these challenges and developed the necessary ideological alignment to support their efforts, in this chapter I examine their process of consensus building in light of those roadblocks to curricular innovation previously discussed and identified in Chapter Two. In order to be successful, the faculty members attempting to implement digital or

multimodal writing had to have developed consensus out of or involving the following: existing ideological infrastructures, visionary leadership, financial and economic resources, physical infrastructures, faculty resources, technological support, and organizational leadership as opposed to the boutique approach to innovation.

## Existing Ideological Infrastructures

The DWC's efforts to construct a multimodal composition curriculum at Miami University must first be examined within the context of the campus culture of the institution itself. Institutional ideologies can make or break attempts at curricular innovation. In this case, I believe specific institutional ideological positions were activated in order to facilitate the development and success of the multimodal composition curriculum.

### *Global Orientation*

Miami University, as befits a major research institution, has a vested interest in developing a more globally oriented student body. An identified mission of the university is to "…extend the frontiers of knowledge…" and "sponsor a wide range of cultural and educational activities which have significance beyond the campus and local community" (Mission Statement 1). They recognize that in order for their students to be considered as participants in business, industry, and most other professions, their students need to have an enhanced understanding and means of interacting with the larger world around them.

Miami University's five-year strategic goals are preceded by statements excerpted from a variety of sources, including the final report of the 2006-2007 First in 2009 Coordinating Council. The excerpt reads, "We have conceptualized 'The Engaged University' as having three fundamental components….the engaged university creates

connections to both local and global communities…" (Five-Year Strategic Goals 1). Specifically articulated in the goals themselves are to "provide multiple opportunities for students to embrace difference and learn skills for living/working in a multicultural world, across curricular, co-curricular, local and global contexts" (2). The Evaluation Team of the Higher Learning Commission noted in the Assurance Section of their Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation visit that "a large number of diversity initiatives and events were identified which enhance or contribute to preparing the learner for a global and diverse society" (10). Located in the rural town of Oxford, technologies offered a clear path to a more globally aware student population, and by extension to greater global reach on the part of the institution.

The DWC offered the institution a means of achieving their goals of a student body that worked well in diverse situations and interacted on a more global scale. The vision of students working with technologies and modalities that would prepare them for engagement in global contexts was in ideological accordance with the university at large. As such, the DWC established goals and objectives that were consistent with the rest of the campus community and which supported the university's stated goals. This diminished the possibility of resistance and enhanced opportunities for institutional consensus.

### *Enhanced Technological Opportunities*

Part and parcel of the university's interest in a more global institutional perspective, involves enhancing the technologies available to both students and teachers on campus. The University's Technology Guide webpage states that "technology is an integral part of teaching and learning at Miami". The Center for the Enhancement of

Learning and Teaching (CELT) website identifies as one of its objectives "to encourage the development and assessment of new technology in teaching and learning". It is technology, particularly digital technologies, through which the vast number of students will interact with a larger global community.

Miami University has committed itself to expanding this reach by facilitating student access to technologies and encouraging the use of informational technologies across campus, both in and outside of courses, with a goal to "become a national model for the use of information technology in supporting the intellectual and co-curricular life of the university" (Five-Year Strategic Goals 2). As well, "recent initiatives in the information technology division, including the appointment of a Vice President and the development of a strategic plan, indicate preparation for the next stages of the institution's development" (Assurance Section 9). The digital writing initiative aligned ideologically with the institution's interest in a more globally oriented student experience through the specific use of digital technologies.

The use of new media in college writing courses facilitated institutional consensus, particularly on an administrative level. "As students now have the capability to use alternative media both to express themselves and to search for new knowledge, the DWC is an important step in moving writing into this new environment" (Hodge. President, Miami University). As well, Provost Herbst observed, "The digital writing initiative has the potential to transform students from simply 'learning how to write' to playing an active role in the creation of new media". The administrative attendance to new media forms and the necessity of students engaging these forms is evident. The DWC provided the package that would assist the university in achieving their goal of

greater technological competence on the part of students and faculty, resulting in greater access to, and hopefully greater interaction with, the global community.

### *Miami Laptops*

The university's attempts to facilitate global reach and technological fluency have taken a variety of forms. One significant action that Miami University has taken is the Miami Notebook program. In an effort to encourage all students to enter college with the technological tools necessary for success in the 21st century, Miami University has started a program in which students have the option to purchase a laptop computer that has software specific to Miami University previously installed. Additionally, the laptops also have screen savers depicting the Miami University logo and in the Miami University colors. At present the Miami Notebook program is optional, but the institution is considering phasing in mandatory purchase of the laptops in the future. The Technology Guide on the university website states "the university strongly recommends a laptop computer….Miami recommends purchasing a laptop through the 'Miami Notebook' offering….Miami Notebooks come with pre-installed software needed to connect to Miami's network and includes on-campus services and support".

The idea behind this program is that if all students have the same technological capabilities, the technologies will be utilized more in the classroom and students will have a more organic grounding in informational, instructional and communicative technologies and the benefits that are incurred through their use. As well, consistent technological preparedness on the part of students would facilitate greater technological adaptation in courses, since instructors could count on students having a basic preparedness level with regard to technologies. At present, the vast majority of students

entering Miami University come to campus with computers. The jump to purchasing laptops customized for an Miami University education is not a long one.

The digital writing program being developed by the Digital Writing Collaborative offered both a validation and an application for the Miami Notebook initiative. Carolyn Gard, Senior Director of Academic Technology Services, observed “here’s the Miami Notebook program rolling out and here’s an academic poster child. That was a real win/win too, so we hooked into that”.

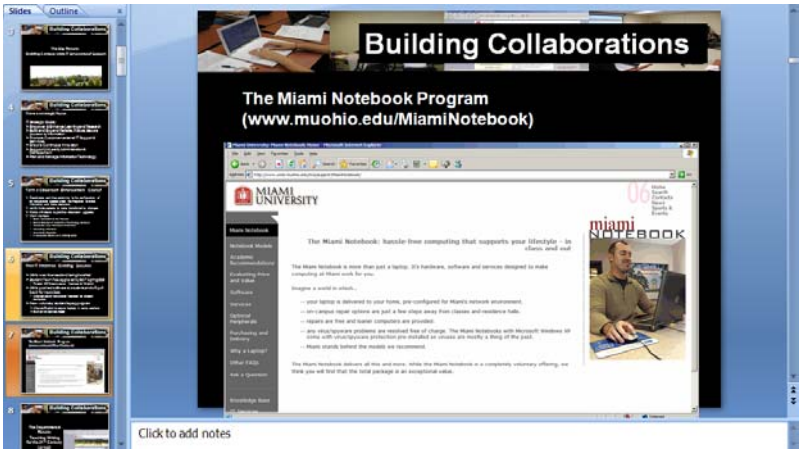


Fig. 1. Miami Notebook Program. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

The DWC and digital writing curriculum justified the academic need for students to have not only laptops, but Miami laptops, pre-loaded with all of the software that would be needed for success in a digital writing course. This did not preclude students who owned other types of laptops from taking the course; though those w/ other types of laptops had to find other means of obtaining, for instance, certain software, in some cases, having to pay to have software installed.

The content and practice found in the digital writing courses would facilitate the use of the laptops and accompanying softwares in other courses by cultivating student fluency with new media forms, digital technologies, and various software programs. The

pairing of the digital writing curriculum and the Miami Notebook program was truly a match made in heaven. The institution foresaw a larger objective; the DWC provided the means of achieving that objective. Again, the consensus did not need to be built in this case; it needed to be activated. The DWC recognized the ideological alignment and acted upon it.

### *Faculty Development and Interdisciplinarity*

But having the technology in the hands of the students isn't the only component in the institutional efforts to promote a more globally oriented student experience. As well, educators must develop innovative classroom practices and adopt innovative pedagogies to meet the growing demands of the student population. Miami University already had an institutional ideology that supports innovation, particularly on the part of faculty. CELT, which supports faculty learning communities and presents the Lilly Conference on college Teaching each year, is designed to facilitate innovative teaching and scholarship involving teaching on the campus.

Among the goals stated by CELT on its website is "to provide an opportunity for Miami faculty to learn about and engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning: sharing their teaching innovations and proven strategies with faculty from Miami and other institutions". Specifically articulated objectives are, among others, "to provide support for instructors and departments to develop new courses, pedagogies, and curricula…", and "to determine topics and provide for topic-based faculty learning communities that investigate and implement innovative teaching and learning opportunities". As well, Miami University is widely regarded on the part of individual faculty to be greatly supportive of faculty ideas and innovation. "There is a clear sense

that at Miami faculty ownership is important" (Advancement Section 7). This pre-existing ideology facilitated the innovative curriculum proposed by the DWC and the English Department by offering an institutional context that supports faculty initiated curricular innovation. The DWC capitalized upon the existing institutional culture in order to garner support for the curriculum. The DWC was also in the lucky position of having had another program establish precedent.

A prior instance of a program that activated institutional ideologies that supported faculty innovation is Miami University's Integrated Media Studies (IMS) program. At present directed by Glenn Platt, this program began in the 90's as a grass roots effort on the part of a few instructors in the English department. The initial objective was to integrate media and digital technologies into diverse curriculums. IMS is, as its name implies, integrated into a variety of programs. The DWC was building upon precedent in so much as they also were proposing a grassroots innovation, as well as one that integrated media and technologies, as well as one that originated within the English Department.

The DWC was also able to gain acceptance due to Miami University's ideological leaning towards and encouragement of interdisciplinarity. In the university Mission Statement it is stated that Miami University is committed to providing "both disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to the pursuit of knowledge and to the solving of problems". In Miami University's Five-Year Strategic Goals the promotion of "interdisciplinary perspectives and innovative programs" is highlighted (3). This crossing of disciplinary boundaries is allied with Miami University's attempts to enhance their global reach, and crossing of national and international boundaries. CELT lists as one of

its goals increased “faculty and departmental collaboration across goals”. The interest in faculty innovation, as well, crosses institutional hierarchical boundaries. Miami University’s vision of the future for itself and its students demands that boundaries be crossed. As such, Miami University is ideologically positioned to be responsive to student demands and faculty efforts to incorporate both new technologies and innovative curriculum. The IMS program has an interdisciplinary focus. The DWC also functions in a more interdisciplinary way than a traditional composition course and offers the possibility of further interdisciplinary collaboration.

*Institution-wide Assessment*

Miami University pursues innovation through thorough programmatic and institutional assessment. Their five-Year Strategic Goals identify the completion of the “Top 25 Project and transformation of introductory courses”, and also urges the promotion of “graduate program excellence through more comprehensive program review, taking into account the evolving nature of academic fields, changing societal needs,…” (2). In the 2005 Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, the Evaluation Team noted of Miami University’s self-evaluation that “both the process and the self-study report itself were found to be very comprehensive and well-organized – a model for other institutions” (Assurance Section 6). They state later in the document that “Miami University has a very long history of assessment initiatives” (Assurance Section 12). And in the Advancement Section it is observed that “the self-study process and report itself were exemplary….without question the best self-study read by any of the team members” (11). It is clear not only from their comments, but also from the assessment practices manifest on campus, that ongoing assessment isn’t considered something that the Miami

University educational community members have to do to determine if goals and objectives are being met, but rather something that in itself facilitates larger institutional goals and objectives.

CELT notes as objectives “to improve and broaden the evaluation of teaching”, “to enhance the assessment of learning…”, “to encourage faculty to develop course and teaching portfolios as a method of formative and/or summative evaluation of teaching”, and “to encourage faculty to investigate and employ classroom assessment techniques…”. As well, CELT promotes itself as having “an assessment-centered approach to faculty development”. It is this focus on ongoing assessment that makes way for interdisciplinary projects and programs, technological initiatives, faculty enterprises, and curricular innovation, all of which are necessary if the institution wishes to provide the kind of global reach for its students that it states as central to its mission. The DWC’s ability to engage in assessment and therefore align ideologically with the institution also served the institutional mission and facilitated the development of the DWC and digital writing course offerings.

The DWC’s programmatic self-assessment will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Though the course revision did not occur as a part of the “Top 25 Initiative”, the revision of first-year composition curriculum to include multimodality and application of digital technologies served as a poster child for the soon to follow “Top 25 Initiative” by meeting the initiative’s goals of comprehensive program review, and also in addressing the changing nature of society and knowledge making and modifying course objectives and content accordingly. The DWC activated existing ideological structures prior to their being articulated campus-wide. Rather than having to be coaxed themselves

in order to produce buy-in, they served to facilitate institutional buy-in by providing a successful model, and further, one that was created autonomously.

## Vision and Leadership

Ideological infrastructures that are amenable to innovation don't simply come about on their own. They are generally the result of the vision of individuals or groups of individuals who promote innovation through their efforts, support, and commitment of resources. The role of the visionaries cannot be understated. It is these individuals who must be cultivated if any curricular innovation is even to be attempted on an institution-wide basis. Miami University has no shortage of these individuals. From the top down, there were visionary individuals who aligned with the efforts of the DWC and thereby helped to advance multimodal composing.

During my interview with Carolyn Gard, she asked if I had interviewed Heidi McKee, stating "I don't know if you've met her yet, but she's a dynamo". Referred to variously as the aforementioned dynamo, a powerhouse, Tasmanian Devil, and a variety of other descriptions along the same vein, I'll call her for my purposes "the champion". She, along with Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, promoted the conception of the DWC and digital composition across campus.

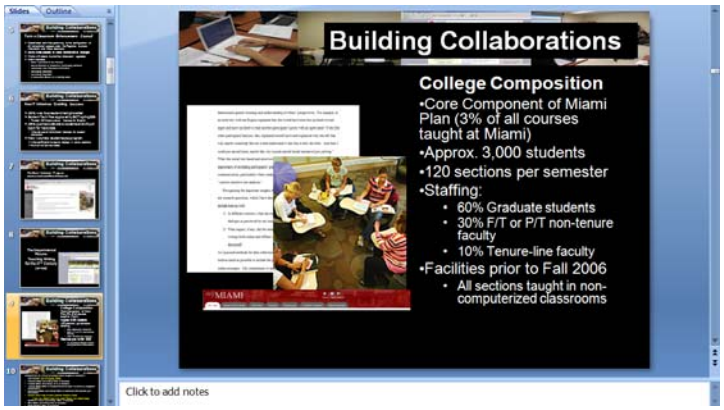


Fig. 2. Comp prior to the inception of the DWC. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

During one of our interviews, Heidi McKee recounted that one of the reasons she applied for the position at Miami University was because she recognized that she could fill a void. “When I applied here…I was out as a computers and writing specialist, and when I looked at Miami, I looked at their course description, their course catalog, studying their website, and I was – I just looked at it and said, ‘they need me’. They don’t have a single computers and writing class”.

Heidi entered the ideological infrastructure with an ideology of her own.

> I started to just see how much writing that is out in the world is not just text on paper, and it is often text with image on paper, or if it is text on paper, it comes with someone having done a presentation and then handing out the paper that, so that only in very few circles is text still just text. And so, that, you know, reinforced my interest in modalities, and my interest in digital technologies just has kept going with all my work….I recognize that students – it’s not that they need to go all to digital multimodality, but they need the full range. So that is my interest.

The institution was not only open to her ideas about computers and composition, but aware of their own lack of such curriculum and hoping to move the English Department in that direction. They were in actuality looking for someone to be “the champion” and make the change happen. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson recalls, “now at the same time that we hired Heidi and with the interest in computers and writing, some people were coming aboard with interest in the digital humanities and also in creative writing, the digital possibilities in creative writing”. But about Heidi, she notes, “she did the legwork. She

did it. She was the persuader, and that's her field. So she really is the one". Heidi McKee was central to efforts to generate institutional support behind the DWC and digital writing initiative. She acted as spokesperson, made friends and alliances campus-wide, and more importantly, generated, documented, and promoted the DWC's vision throughout the campus. Other members of the campus community recognized her as a visionary leader and aligned behind her in support of the new curriculum.

This still could not have happened without the vision of a number of other people, both before and after Heidi's hire. Firstly, she had to have the support of her department chair, Keith Tuma. Professor Tuma himself had a vision of the English Department as engaging more hybrid forms and working in what might be considered an interdisciplinary way. He supported curricular innovation that included incorporation of new media, digitization, and experimental forms. Multimodal comp was in line with his own ideological positioning, and he was readily receptive to it. During my interview with him he recounted that,

> We were fortunate to hire one new scholar, Heidi McKee, who, soon as she started, began making the case to me about our need for digital writing instruction in first year composition. She didn't really need to make the case to me….They didn't have to convince me in the least that writing itself had changed. Anybody who reads the news on the web can see that things just don't look the same. Anybody with a $200 digital camera can embed a film in their essay….So it didn't take a lot to convince me that we needed to respond to a changing culture of and for writing by educating students to do some of these things, to work intelligently and critically and

> creatively with new writing and communication technologies and the possibilities they afford. It occurred to me that if we didn't, we would soon have a faculty that was, in crucial ways, behind students entering Miami.

Keith Tuma readily saw both the need and opportunity. This vision facilitated the initiative that Heidi McKee and Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson would put forward. He continues to himself act as a champion of the digital writing initiative even as he moves into his new role of Associate Dean.

The Presidents, past and current, and Provost were also instrumental in the emergence of the DWC. The president of any institution in large part sets the institutional tone and establishes the agenda or mission. In this case, the mission involved global reach and inquiry-based teaching and learning. The current President, President Hodge, has begun to make his imprint by, among other things, instituting the "Top 25 Project".

> The project focuses on our highest enrollment courses. The project calls for innovative approaches that move learning away from, as the president says, 'too much time telling students what we think they need to know, and not enough time using their curiosity to drive their learning.' Instead, the Top 25 Project aims to develop learning models that are inquiry driven, call for active learning, and place the student at the very center of the learning experience. Through redesign of high enrollment courses that are departmentally owned, the project aims to create systemic change in undergraduate learning at Miami. (The Top 25 Project)

Though initiatives such as the Top 25 Project course reviews have set the stage for institutional innovation on a departmental and course level, the DWC was developed prior to the formalization of this institutional agenda in the Top 25 Project. As such, the digital writing courses served as an example of the kind of course redesign that the President was calling for. However, the President's initiatives nonetheless facilitated the ongoing development, as well as the continuing funding, of the DWC program by establishing a fertile institutional culture.

The Provost, Jeffrey Herbst, was identified by all stakeholders as an individual without whose support the DWC could not have come into existence. Associate Provost Dick Pettitt when speaking of his own support of the DWC pointed out, "I used to be Associate Dean of Libraries for 20 years, and so we were always doing lots of stuff with technology. So nobody had to twist my arm to try this kind of thing". However, he also noted that he could not have assisted the DWC in their efforts without the "support of the Provost in wanting to make it happen". As stated earlier, the Provost saw the value in instruction using new media forms and the ways in which working with new media would allow students to be creators of knowledge and not simply receivers. He not only supported the initiative by securing funding, he established a trail of consensus by making his support evident and gathering other supporters behind him. To this extent the actual content of the initiative served to instigate necessary institutional support.

The institutional support on the parts of the President, Provost, Dean, and Department Chair in essence 'green lighted' the project and encouraged other stakeholders to do what they could to facilitate. One of the most important of these was Carolyn Gard. She recognized the potential of the project from the start. "The times were

right to take things to the next level. It was a very strategic issue. It was going to impact the whole campus. And it was going to be one of those transformative things for the campus that was going to start a lot of things going. So it couldn't have been a more perfect project from my point of view".

It was Mrs. Gard's attention to financing and building of relationships that facilitated the completion of the laptop classrooms that were integral to the implementation of the new curriculum. And it is her ongoing attention and commitment to the project that has resulted in the conversion of additional classroom spaces and the anticipated conversion of more in the future. Additionally, it was her admonition to work from the pedagogy being promoted, not the technologies being required that articulated the tone for the ideological positioning of the DWC itself. She told both Heidi McKee and Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson early on as they were meeting with the classroom designers that "it is really, really important when you meet…to talk about your pedagogy. Tell him how you want to teach. What you want to do in the classroom….But don't start with the technology because you're never going to end up at the right place…." The initiators of the DWC followed her advice and have "ended up at the right place." By advocating as visionaries and engaging with other visionaries on campus, the DWC was able to secure wide-spread, high-level institutional support.

## Economics

Vision demands cash and resources. It might also be argued that vision is what finds cash and resources, and that is true in this case as well. There were significant resources available to be used to facilitate the vision, ultimately shared, of a digital first-year writing curriculum. These resources took the form of cash, physical spaces, and

technologies. Firstly, the Miami notebook program facilitated many of the technological needs of the curriculum. Students in digital writing sections could be required to bring a laptop to class with them, in part, because of the success of the laptop program on campus. This was an essential component in the success of the digital writing initiative.

The access to the multiple modes could only be provided efficiently via the use of digital mediums. As well, the digital is becoming in contemporary society a significant mode of representation. It was a necessity to have unlimited student access to digital technologies in order to facilitate the multimodal mission of the redesigned curriculum. To this extent, the DWC was fortunate to not have had to secure funding for this level of technologies upgrade. Thought, certainly, there were costs, other than providing computers, associated with promoting courses that were so heavily reliant upon digital technologies. The conversion of traditional classrooms to digital access classrooms was a significant consideration and required that the DWC develop support in order to secure funding and facilities.

### *Technology Upgrades*

According to Carolyn Gard, there was money that had been sitting waiting to be spent on classroom upgrades, though other stakeholders were being very conservative in their spending. She recounted her boss saying “Carolyn, you’ve got to get them to spend it because otherwise we’re going to lose it.” She explained, “we don’t lose money at the end of the year, but people are going to think you don’t need it. You lose it in that sense” (Gard). Once it was shaken loose from the tree, the funds were there for use in developing a standard level of technology for classrooms. However, there were other more costly technological needs inherent in developing a digital curriculum.

IT had funds designated to upgrade classrooms, but they had to work with other entities on campus in order to create the technological upgrades that the DWC would need for its digital writing program. This in part would fall to the newly formed Classroom Enhancement Council. The CEC was charged with pooling resources to support certain initiatives on campus by way of facilities and technologies infrastructures. It is significant that the participants on this committee represented different departments and institutional entities, and were not bound to contribute to the pool. The committee functioned by consensus. Only those projects agreed to by all participants were eligible for the funding.

According to Dick Pettitt, "there are three major pools, me and the Provost's office, IT and PFD….And while we are all sitting at the table, talking about how best to leverage the money, we all still keep control over money...We haven't gone to the next step, which is let's put it all in a central pool and divvy it up". The CEC saw the value of the digital writing curriculum – the way in which it assisted in the development of the Miami Notebook initiative, the way in which is was in line with current efforts to upgrade classroom technologies, the way in which it stood to offer a model for pedagogical change based upon technological capabilities - and spoke to this value by designating monetary resources to be used in developing classroom spaces for the new curriculum. Dick Pettitt notes,

> Well, at the time we were looking to try to find ways in which to help people who wanted to do kind of new and exciting things in the classroom….And so one of the things that we, on the council, were looking for was a way to not only upgrade those prototype classrooms that

we had built earlier, but to find a way to help people prototype …in spaces we didn't control.

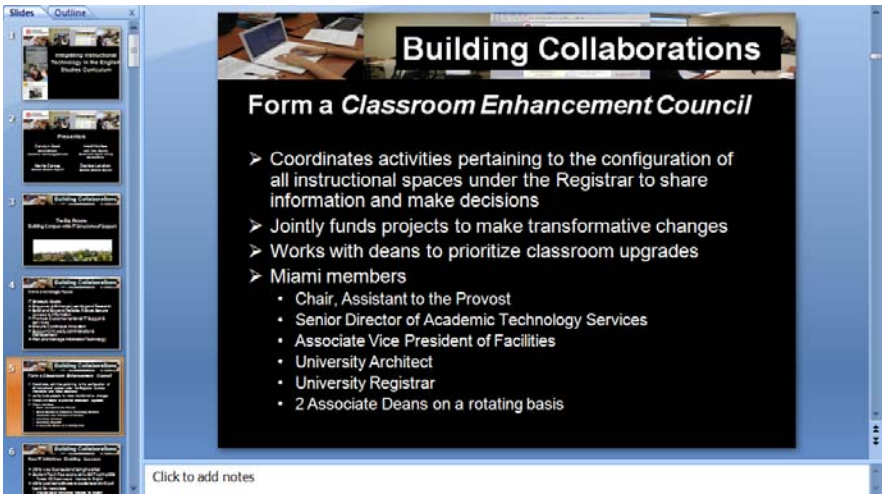


Fig. 3. CEC. Power point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

These were not the only stakeholders to play a role in meeting the functional needs of the new program. IMS, and Director, Glenn Platt, also contributed by pooling and sharing resources. IMS had a classroom, DWC had resources for conversion, and together they could have a laptop classroom for use by both programs. It was this less-formal, but just as valuable sharing of resources that also helped get the DWC on their feet. Heidi McKee observed, "we got the college to put up $5000.00, and then we teamed up with Integrated Media Studies who had all these computers and no place to put them, and I was like, 'I can get you a classroom'. So I went to the registrar, got a classroom, and then we, I don't know, it just – again, connecting all the people".

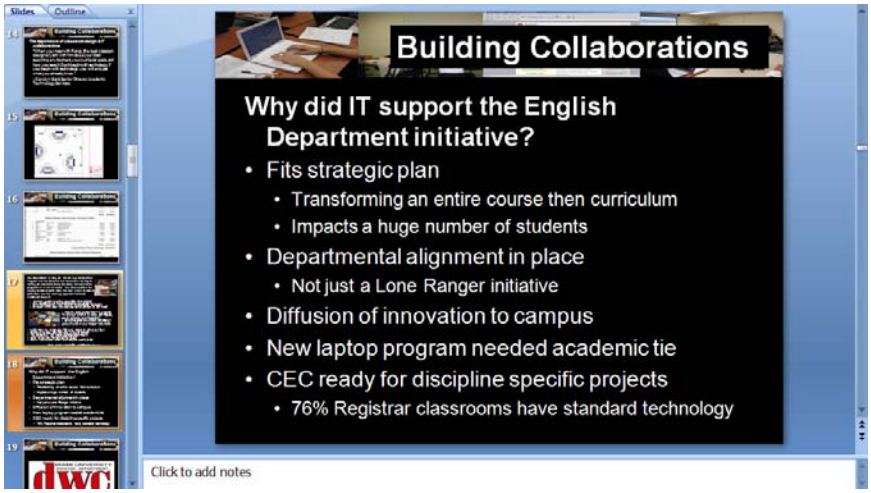


Fig. 4. IT support. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

*Establishing Relationships*

Heidi and Cindy also submitted for grants and sought monetary support from other sources. Though this did not result in significant amounts of money, it did serve to create connections and establish relationships. Heidi recalled, "it was connecting. I was sort of the linchpin or the focal through which all of these people were connecting, intersecting….I met with Carolyn and she said, 'well, we'll put in this much if you can get so-and-so to put in some', so we went to business and we got them to put in some…". At the beginning of the process the focus was on obtaining small pieces that kept the initiative moving forward and that served to develop the network of relationships that could, and in this case would, eventually provide ongoing support. Members of the DWC also searched for other resources, such as free software downloads for instructors. These efforts in themselves, though not accounting for significant amounts of money, presented a sort of good will gesture to other stakeholders that allowed for greater trust and buy-in.

## Physical Infrastructures

Free software and small grants were not the key to solving what has been identified as one of the largest inhibitors to technological innovation on college campuses. Heidi McKee observed, “we couldn’t have changed our curriculum as much as we have, and we couldn’t have influenced so many instructors and students if we hadn’t had the spaces”. The physical infrastructure needed to be upgraded and made appropriate for a digital writing curriculum, which by its nature would involve a greater degree of group and interactive work, and hence mobility. There were necessary technological upgrades, as well as spacial considerations to be taken into account.

### *Classroom Enhancement*

Miami University had already made a commitment to classroom enhancements by the time the DWC was conceived. From about 2004 the University had been slowly upgrading all classrooms to be “smart” classrooms, with a goal of technological consistency for instructors. Carolyn Gard states that they wanted all instructors to be able to go into any classroom and know that it would have a basic technological capability.

> We went on a pretty frantic project to put a standard level of technology in all registrar rooms….The standard level…basically it is an instructor station with a computer, DVD, VCR. Although VCR’s are starting to go obsolete and we’ll upgrade to Blu-ray and stuff like that over time…and then a ceiling-mounted digital projector. And it’s all controlled by a touch pad…So that, you know, every classroom looks the same to the faculty.

Their rationale was that instructors are more apt to integrate instructional technologies if they feel that they can recognize and use the classroom technologies reliably. Once

instructors knew that the technology would be consistently available, regardless of where or when the class was scheduled, they would feel confident to integrate the use of those technologies into their classroom practices. This conversion was almost complete when Heidi McKee first began pitching digital writing.

### *Wi-Fi*

Another key component, without which the curricular innovation would have been difficult, if not impossible, was campus Wi-Fi. According to the Technology Guide web page, "wireless access is available in all buildings, as well as many outdoor common areas". Paul Anderson, an English Department faculty member who also runs the campus writing center, noted during an interview that "we've been this way for several years now." The complete conversion to Wi-Fi meant that the digital infrastructure and accompanying access to the internet was in place and wasn't a hindrance to the development of the curriculum. It is significant that at Miami University *all* buildings are Wi-Fi, and not just some of them.

This again reflects the institutional understanding of the importance of digital spaces and the interconnectedness that digital communication, the internet, brings with it. If your goal is for students to develop global perspectives and for the institution to have global reach, cross-campus access to the internet is mandatory. Clearly the institution saw this and acted upon it even before they had the curricular impetus to do so. In this sense, again, as with the Miami Notebook program, the DWC was just what the institution was looking for to tie all of its initiatives together and provide application and a measurable outcome.

*Flexible Spaces*

So by the time the DWC came into being, Miami University already had full-campus Wi-Fi, classrooms converted to smart classrooms with a standard level of technology, a program to get laptops into the hands of all of their students, and money to support additional classroom enhancements. All of this does not fully solve the noted difficulties in adapting physical infrastructures to accommodate new curriculums and instructional technologies. Universities were designed for a very specific type of teaching. Teachers in front, students sitting. Limited numbers and configurations. There are still, after all, walls. This ideological position as manifested in the physical structure of classrooms continues to pose a problem for the DWC, insomuch as they have found that the classroom spaces are too small for the work that is being done in them, and do not accommodate the way in which the digital technologies is changing student-student and student-teacher interaction in the classroom.

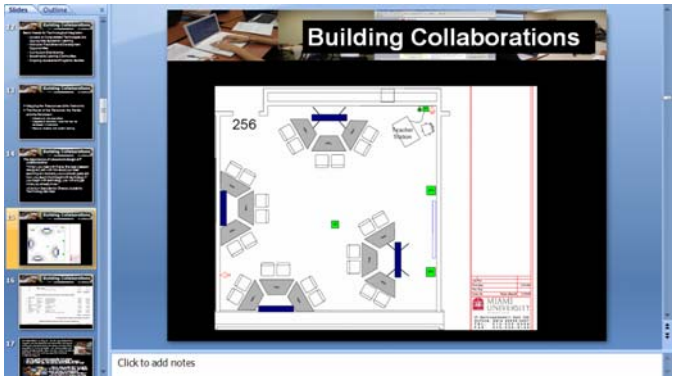


Fig. 5. Digital classroom configuration. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

A digital composition course demands more integrated, and perhaps more importantly, more active learning, including movement around the room, group work, and multiple activities taking place simultaneously. Dick Pettitt observes “people want more flexible seating, which means you need more square footage per student. And when

the walls are the walls we're basically finding that in many cases the number of students that we can put in that section basically goes down. So that will be the big challenge." This is being dealt with by continued re-evaluation of furnishings and configuration. Despite having developed an institutional understanding of the ways in which the multimodal focus of the work demands different spacial, technological and financial accommodations, the walls themselves have to stay -- for now.

## Faculty Development

If the walls are to come down, it will only be by the will of the faculty.

Cuban identifies faculty resistance as a primary factor in the failure of curricular innovation, noting "the official curriculum is what state and district officials set forth in curricular frameworks and courses of study….But teachers, working alone in their classrooms choose what to teach and how to present it….the taught curriculum differs from the official curriculum" (*Lure of* 4). Faculty resistance and pedagogical stasis are significant reasons why curricular innovation, particularly involving instructional technologies, fails. Note the abandonment of Miami University's English department computer lab in the 80's.

Faculty members hold deeply entrenched values. They subscribe to institutional hierarchies and hierarchical roles that have been in place for generations. They, far too often, teach from how they were taught. Reprogramming instructional ideologies is a difficult job. Classroom instructors hold on tightly to their pedagogical stances and instructional methodologies, despite what has been variously termed reform, innovation, improvement, etc. As a long-time educator having myself watched the reform flavor of the year come and go, it is no wonder that faculty members more often than not, stick to

what they know and have been doing, rather than jumping on the reform bandwagon. In order to create faculty buy-in there needs to be significant time and resources devoted to cultivating not only the inclination to adopt new pedagogies and curriculum, but also to developing new methodologies to facilitate the conversion.

The Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University engaged in a variety of successful faculty development initiatives that contributed to their ability to develop consensus among both faculty and administrators in support of the new digital writing curriculum. Carolyn Gard observed, "you don't just redesign a course and say, oh yeah, the new graduate student or the new faculty member is going to just know how to teach it….They've got web pages. They've got paper manuals. They've got a blackboard organization site. They have all kinds of events. They do everything possible. They do mentoring…". All of the above mentioned facilitated institutional buy-in by providing the tools for instructors to be successful when implementing the new curriculum.

*GA's*

The DWC's job was made somewhat easier at the outset because Miami University's first-year comp program is staffed in large part by the approximately 40 graduate students from the Composition and Rhetoric, Literature, Creative Writing, and Scientific and Technical Writing programs. This circumstance allowed the DWC initiators to mandate teacher training. This also resulted in a pool of faculty who did not have as deeply entrenched beliefs about teaching and learning paradigms as long term faculty. Abby Dubisar recounts taking a course in which Heidi McKee was the instructor. "I think the people who took that course became more and more interested in different pedagogies they could try out, or the possibilities for different classroom practices…".

Though the DWC did not initially mandate that GA's teach the digital composition courses, the DWC was nonetheless able to invite, both through courses and open invitation, a more willing faculty to participate, train them thoroughly, and reprogram them, so to speak, before their programming was complete. By 2009 all GA's were required to begin their teaching in computerized classrooms, rather than beginning in traditional classrooms and later having to adapt to computerized environments.

Those GA's wishing to be involved in the DWC also participated in a summer workshop to prepare them to teach the digital writing courses. The lead cohort met during the summer of 2006 to literally design the digital writing program. They wrote a mission statement, designed a logo, determined course content and strategies, and generally engaged in planning for sustainability through the first year. This participation in the nuts and bolts planning of the initiative helped secure the instructor buy-in that was already manifested in those instructors volunteering to participate in the initiative by allowing faculty to own the curricular innovation being proposed, rather than having it handed to them from the top down.

### *Teaching Resources*

All GA's at Miami University are given resources to assist them in developing their teaching skills and engaging successfully in the classroom. Miami University's comp program provides all faculty teaching in the program with a massive teacher's guide/manual. This text has been retooled to include information and references for teaching with a focus on multiple modalities and digital technologies. This process has evolved over time. Initially the digital sections were add-ons. Abby Dubisar recounts "so that summer, the decision was made that we'd want to have some sort of component in

the teacher's guide….At that time, we decided it would make most sense to have a separate section that would be cross-referenced throughout the teacher's guide…". These sections on digital writing and the use of digital technologies and multimodal composing have since been fully incorporated into the teacher's guide, perhaps mirroring the level at which digital composition has been embraced by the faculty and the extent to which it has been incorporated into the Miami University composition curriculum as a whole.

GA's teaching with the DWC have a blackboard site used to share resources and carry on a teaching community discussion forum.

## Digital Writing Collaborative@ Miami University: A Space for Teachers

Fig. 6. http://dwcblog.wordpress.com/.

The site also provides links to articles involving theory and practice. Blogs are also used to facilitate discussion amongst the GA's teaching in the DWC. The use of these formats not only helps develop programmatic affiliation, it also reinforces the exploration of textual construction in digital spaces.

*Workshops*

The DWC also offers ongoing workshops for all faculty, designed to not only train those already committed to teaching in the DWC and laptop classrooms, but also to entice additional faculty to participate. Jason Palmeri, Assistant Professor in the Composition and Rhetoric program, who often leads these workshops, notes

> I think one of the things I really am trying to emphasize is that this is not necessarily just a comp rhet thing, and this actually works well in the department, because at the faculty level I have colleagues in literary studies that do work in digital humanities, and colleagues in creative

writing who do really interesting sorts of video and audio performance work.

Over the last year the DWC has also instituted faculty workshops entitled “Tea with the DWC”.


Fig. 7. Tea with the DWC poster. Courtesy of Jason Palmeri.

These are a combination of workshop, networking, and snack break, all designed to build greater community, not only within the DWC, but also within the English Department as a whole -- tea and cookies designed to develop faculty involvement. Jason Palmeri also leads these sessions but is looking to push others to lead as well. “More and more I’m trying to get graduate students to come in as facilitators.…And next semester I’m going to start trying to recruit faculty from creative writing and literature to come and do topic teas as well.”

Within DWC sponsored events there is never an attempt to promote a specific pedagogical stance. Rather, the DWC attempts to ask not what shall you do for the DWC, but what might the DWC do for you? The pitch is, let us show you how these technologies, which we have made available to all of you, might assist you in meeting

your specific course goals and supporting your specific pedagogies. “I think I try to kind of start and think, what is it that my colleagues want to do in their class? What would they want?” (Palmeri). Always the DWC is an invitation; never is it an ultimatum or forced movement. The way in which the DWC addressed issues of pedagogy and ideology will be discussed in greater length in Chapter Five.

### *Individualized Support*

Perhaps more important than the workshops, guides and tea parties, is the one-to-one support that is given to instructors and students participating in the digital writing courses. Both Heidi McKee and Jason Palmeri expend a great amount of time working to develop faculty involvement and support faculty practice. They do this by extending themselves, working long hours, and never saying no to those who would participate, but need significant support in order to feel comfortable doing so, noting “we are always available to meet with people individually to help them out” (Palmeri). The DWC members offer their time, not simply their rhetoric. It is also this focus on invitation by showing and doing and supporting, not talking and demanding that assists in building a support base and offers the greatest possibility for widespread pedagogical change on an institutional basis.

### Tech Support

In order for faculty to agree to work with new technologies they must feel secure in the knowledge that they can successfully manage the new technologies; however, they also must feel that the technologies will work consistently. In order to sustain faculty buy-in faculty members must feel secure not only in the technologies, but in the technological support system. They must be secure that if there is a technological failure,

someone will arrive to save the day. At Miami University this is exactly what happens. Michele Polak, a GA in the DWC, observes “we have a good relationship with IT. They know who we are mostly because they come in and they sit in on our classes.” The relationship with IT is significant. It only takes one failure of technology to cause an instructor to abandon its use. Well versed in the promise of technology’s ability to enhance classroom productivity, only to have failure or inconsistent performance of technologies sabotage instructional efforts, many teachers are leery, to say the least, of relying too heavily upon any technology, be it overheads or computers.

*Technology Hotline*

Miami University in anticipation of this has installed what I’ll refer to as a “red phone” in each laptop classroom used by the DWC. If an instructor should encounter a problem with the technologies in the classroom, all they need do is pick up the phone and call for help. They have the option of waiting for a technician to work with them over the phone or dialing a special code for DWC instructors and going “code red” (my term), resulting in being connected to a technician who will come to the classroom at once. Not only is there a voice immediately on the other end of the phone, but a technician is dispatched forthwith to assist the instructor in need. Michele Polak testifies to this. “We have a code when we dial in. If we dial ‘9’ it takes us directly to immediate…It’s a regular IT number, but if you dial ‘9’ it takes you to somebody that gets there right now. And we know to do that from being trained through all of this”.

I witnessed the IT response speed first hand when observing a section of Eng 111, a digital first semester comp course. The instructor, in this case Michele Polak, had a series of activities planned, all of which relied upon digital access to both audio and

video. She couldn't get video. She picked up the phone and within 5 minutes, there were not one but two technicians bustling in to the room to provide an immediate fix. I had heard the rhetoric that there was extensive and immediate tech support for the laptop classrooms and instructors teaching in them, but this defied even my expectations. It also demonstrated that at Miami University, with regard to tech support at least, they put their money where their mouth is. A lack of tech support will not be allowed to become a barrier to curricular innovation. There may be other barriers, but lack of technological and pedagogical support for faculty has not been allowed to come into play. The DWC has been able to articulate the necessity of immediate tech support for instructors and has gained cooperation for the technical support services necessary to sustain faculty buy-in.

## No Lone Rangers Here

Nespor cites as reason for the failure of technological innovation on campuses the lone ranger or boutique approach to innovation. He argues that in order for innovation to occur and be sustained, there must be an organization-wide effort and buy-in. Any innovation that relies on only one individual is doomed to fail once the individual innovator is no longer present or active. Additionally, no one individual can sustain the time and energy to develop a program by themselves. If technological, or for that matter any, curricular innovation is to succeed, then it must take place at the hands of a variety of individuals invested in the curricular innovation (54).

Miami University had already acknowledged that it needed someone to spearhead curricular changes involving the inclusion of new digital technologies prior to Heidi McKee's arrival. In fact, it is apparent that Miami University identified Heidi as possibly filling that role prior to her official hire. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson recalls "we had some

searches for new assistant professors in composition and rhetoric and for one of those searches we identified the area of digital writing, computers as a research specialty area…And that search produced our wonderful colleague Heidi McKee". But at the same time, Miami University stakeholders recognize that, as Keith Tuma observes, comp instructors are in demand and can move on to other schools, and they do. Meaning, Professor Tuma recognized that in order to sustain the curricular innovation, he needed multiple Heidis. This was the impetus for hiring Jason Palmeri. "So I hired somebody else named Jason Palmeri thinking that if Heidi bolts on me I've got somebody as backup here, and also I can build a critical cohort of faculty so that they have people to talk to and people to help out with their service burdens, people to help build an institution" (Tuma).

Institutionalization of curriculum relies upon obtaining support from a number of sectors of the educational community. Dr. Tuma recognizes this and plans to continue his support from his new position as associate dean, noting "I also want to boost collaboration and cooperation between departments, and I think that will help make sure the most important parts of what we've done remain in place". New faculty are being hired who will support the innovation. Responsibility for the curriculum is being dispersed in order to ensure that no one individual is doing it all or responsible for it all. The formalization of the curriculum and accompanying pedagogical practices is a departmental action, not the action of an individual.

### Know Your Stuff

Regardless of how many people were initially involved in the process of developing the curriculum, those individuals had to have done their homework prior to

pitching the curriculum. Curricular innovation of this magnitude, not to mention this cost, does not happen solely because of the personal dynamics involved. Though Heidi McKee was in large part responsible for both spearheading and developing the DWC, she could not have had the success she had without having been extraordinarily prepared to make the pitch and develop the support. Stakeholder after stakeholder that I have spoken with have attested to the level of preparedness on the part of not only Heidi McKee but also Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson. Keith Tuma observes, "when Heidi came to my office one day and said she'd like to get going with digital writing instruction for English 111 and 112, I said, 'Well, go put together some research for me on what other universities are doing by way of multimodal first-year writing coursework'. And with her energy, which is considerable, she went and did that and presented me with the data that got the upper administration on board in a hurry".

Heidi and Cindy had all of their bases covered. And as a result, people believed what they had to say and had less fear about committing resources and support. Carolyn Gard remembers, "They had done the groundwork for all of the things they ended up doing…The critical thing for me was the departmental alignment that I saw. They really had thought it through to where they knew what they wanted to do. The chair was 100 percent behind it….it wasn't just a one-time let's go and talk with Carolyn and put up a good front. It was real".

This preliminary work contributed to their getting support from the CEC. The end result was that the innovation wasn't personality based, but research and planning based. The initiative was an institutional change, not an individual one. Though it may seem paradoxical, the visionary, though an integral part of the innovative process, can't

work alone and can't depend upon vision alone. They need partners, facts, and figures in order to prove both institutional need and institutional viability. Stakeholders need to know from the start that their support will not be misspent. Dick Pettitt observes that,

> I remember I attended the ESLI conference…and a number of Miami folks who were associated with the collaborative gave a presentation about the spaces and about their programs, and had a good bit of assessment data that indicated that students liked them. Students' writing was improving as a result of it. So from my perspective, those were the kinds of things that were persuasive to me that this was a worthwhile investment.

Preparedness and being able to provide a convincing argument articulated in the specific stakeholder's language is crucial to developing wide-spread institutional consensus.

Miami University's DWC has been able to successfully navigate many, if not most, of the issues identified as significant barriers to implementation of innovative curriculum. This is noteworthy, since it is clear that many institutions stumble from the outset in attempting to make institutional change on this level. They were able to navigate these barriers in part because of their ability to identify and capitalize upon preexisting institutional conditions that facilitated the implementation of a multimodal composition curriculum. There were, however, other factors that contributed to the successful implementation of a first-year digital writing curriculum at Miami University, including a departmental and institutional history of innovative practice, the DWC's ideology of inclusivity, a focus on pedagogical development, development of successful articulation strategies, and commitment to moving as slowly as necessary in order to build a solid

foundation for the development of the curriculum. These additional factors will be the focus of the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 5: ENGAGING THE LOCAL

The Digital Writing Collaborative at Miami University has been successful in developing institutional consensus on an institutional level by addressing many of the historical pitfalls outlined in the scholarship on curricular innovation and implementation of technologies in higher education, such as attaining faculty and administrative buy-in for new curriculum, cultivating economic and infrastructural support, and providing visionary leadership. They did this, in part, by fostering cooperation across the campus community and building upon pre-existing institutional ideological infrastructures in order to secure consensus in support of the new curriculum. The following chapter will explore factors influencing the process of consensus building at Miami University that fall outside of those challenges identified in the scholarship outlined in Chapters Two and the associated strategies engaged at Miami University that served as the focus of Chapter Four.

The following chapter will address strategies that may not have featured significantly in the scholarship on curricular innovation, but were nonetheless activated by the faculty at Miami University. Firstly, Miami University has a history of curricular innovation within the English department from which the faculty could draw. This established a foundation upon which the DWC could build. As well, within the DWC itself there were a variety of actions and beliefs that assisted in their successful consensus building efforts. These actions include promoting an ideology of inclusivity, maintaining a focus on pedagogies as opposed to technologies, developing successful articulation strategies for use in marketing and publicizing the program, focusing on building relationships and developing the program over time, and perhaps most importantly,

instituting immediate and ongoing assessment practices. These actions contributed significantly to their ability to garner the cooperation that contributed to the successful implementation of the multimodal first-year composition curriculum.

## A History of Innovation

The ideological infrastructure at Miami University, including its support of faculty innovation, has already been discussed in this study. However, within the English department itself there has been a history of innovative practice. Royer, Miller, Love, Dautermann, Corbett, Cairns, and Budhecha note

> Miami's experiments with 'process models', portfolios, sentence combining, multiculturalism, and feminist models of teaching have been visible in national discussions (even prominent at times) thanks to the work of Miami faculty such as Don Daiker and Max Morenberg on sentence combining (1985), Susan Jarratt on multicultural classrooms (1994), and feminist pedagogies (1998), Kate Ronald on reasoned inquiry and romanticism (1998), and Paul Anderson on audience-centered communication (1987). (31)

In the late 70's and early 80's Miami University's English department sponsored two conferences on the subject of sentence combining and the teaching of writing. Miami faculty from 1978, Don Daiker, Andrew Kerek, and Max Morenberg in their preface to *Sentence Combining and the Teaching of Writing. Selected Papers from the Miami University Conference*, note that "more than 350 people representing over 100 institutions in 38 states and Canada came to Oxford, Ohio to attend the Miami University

Conference" (vii) Mellon observed that the 1978 conference was "the first national-scope professional meeting devoted exclusively to sentence combining" (1).

Perhaps more significantly, in 2003 members of the Miami University English department published on the department's efforts to assess and redesign the first-year writing curricula. The article, "Revisiting College Composition within a Local 'Culture of Writing'" by Royer, et al., makes evident a continuity in approach and vocabulary between those engaging in curricular redesign from 1999-2003 and those implementing multimodal composition beginning in 2005. One parallel is particularly significant. In both the 2003 article by Royer, et al. and an, as yet, unpublished article by the founding members of the DWC, (Alexander, Carsey, Dubisar, Fedeczko, Landrum, Lewiecki-Wilson, McKee, Moore, Patterson, & Polak), there is a theme of working with stakeholders in order to build institutional community. This, what I term, ideology of inclusivity is the guiding ideological framework from which the DWC works. This appears to be in line with earlier ideological positioning within the department. For example, in the article by Royer, et al., they note that "our composition group has consistently avoided doctrinaire approaches to composition…" (31). They state that they "certainly wanted to create buy-in for the revised curriculum from as many people as we could…" (32), and that they "hoped that this strategy of inclusion, besides helping to assure that all voices were heard and that the dialogue would be as rich as possible, would encourage wide commitment to the project" (33).

Alexander et, al. reflecting on the diversity of backgrounds and pedagogies amongst faculty involved in developing the digital writing program, note that "we began with a commitment to validate this range of interests" (7). As well, the DWC in order "to

encourage discussion and collaboration…also offered open mentoring workshops to all interested faculty and instructors" (Alexander, et, al. 9). And finally, the DWC state that they were "not only hoping for sustainability but also to share and gain knowledge from our peers outside the DWC who have or are interested in integrating composing with digital technologies into their traditional classroom pedagogy" (Alexander et, al. 10). There is a language of inclusion that is in evidence in both the earlier publication regarding assessment and the recent unpublished article by members of the DWC. This language is one manifestation of an ideology of inclusivity that I believe was a key factor in the successful implementation of the first-year digital writing curriculum.

## Ideology of Inclusivity

In a conversation with Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson about how the DWC responded to any resistance they encountered as they were attempting to sell and implement the curriculum, she responded with what I deem are crucial words. "My philosophy is - you never resist resistance head-on". This seems to be the mantra for the program. The DWC made a conscious choice to work with any resistance in a productive, positive, inclusive way, one that did not seek to alienate or disenfranchise anyone - student or faculty or staff. The faculty initiators of the DWC realized that buy-in requires meeting individuals at the place where they are, not where you'd like them to be, Heidi notes, "…you can't ask them to go too far out of their zone, because then they can't succeed. You start and you just build…That's why I always try to make it a sideways continuance, not this way, because doing a website is not better than doing a print-based paper. It's different, and they're meeting some of the same goals, and each are important".

Rather than engaging in destructive patterns of departmental behavior, such as attempting to undercut other faculty or force faculty and students to participate, the DWC focused almost exclusively on inviting participation. “There may be some writing instructors that didn’t want to do something new…We said, not everybody has to do this. We value what you do well too.” (Lewiecki-Wilson). This willingness to invite rather than mandate seems to arise out of a common philosophy within the department: value of diversity. Lewiecki-Wilson notes, “I have great respect for my colleagues…My style was to always listen and try to be collaborative with the people I work with”. Jason Palmeri notes, “I honestly don’t think that everyone has to be involved…I don’t know anything about Chaucer…I think someone should know about Chaucer …as long as I feel like they think, well, somebody ought to know how to teach with digital technology and we’re glad Jason does”.

*Universal Design*

This support of diverse perspectives is also reflected through Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson’s work with disability studies and interest in universal design. According to the Center for Universal Design, “universal design is the design of products and environments to be made usable by all people to the greatest extent possible…” Lewiecki-Wilson notes “I had gotten a grant…to incorporate universal design into all the courses I was teaching….So that was in place before we went multimodal, but it really depends upon principles that are very digital in a lot of ways.” Universal Design principles are in line with both the departmental ideology of inclusion and also the philosophy of enhanced individual agency undergirding multiliteracies pedagogy. Some of the guidelines of universal design include, “avoid segregating or stigmatizing any

users…design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities….provide choice in methods of use….use different modes (pictoral, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information" (Center for Universal Design). Though universal design principles were not overtly or widely engaged in the development of the DWC and digital writing program, they contributed to the ideological foundation upon which the program is built.

### *Rhetoric*

Within the English department and the DWC there are rhetorical patterns that manifest this ideology of inclusivity. The language used in documents and websites speaks to students, faculty, and potential faculty of invitation, value of diversity, and ongoing process. The departmental website for Undergraduate Programs states that "College Composition classes are designed to encourage students to extend their range of rhetorical experiences,…examine their assumptions about language use, and interact with others who hold views different from their own". A DWC grant proposal identified as an outcome, for the DWC to "foster a university culture supportive of digital literacy through the sharing of research at workshops, seminars, and conferences" (President's). In the Letter from the Chair, posted on the English Department website, Keith Tuma observes that "In English we study the production and analysis of texts, That means that we study all kinds of symbolic action: visual and verbal, print and digital texts and images, and other cultural forms and practices as well as poems, plays, novels, stories, and essay. You might say that in English we (still) study reading and writing, in a hundred different ways". And to tie all of these hundred ways of knowing together in one faculty, he points out that "because we share this core concern with text, interpretation,

and value, there is a vital sense of community in the department". The teacher's page of the Composition at Miami website self observes that "this site is a portal to worlds of information that you can use in your teaching….As a teacher at Miami you are part of a community of scholar-teachers. This site offers you several ways to participate in this community. Choose your own adventure!"

The DWC also employs a rhetoric of inclusion in its documents. In its mission statement posted on the English Department website, the DWC states as two aspects of their mission "to support students and instructors as they learn and teach with digital technologies and digital texts in a variety of English courses" and "to build connections with other digital initiatives across campus and across the country". To this end they "offer workshops to the English department focusing on various pedagogical and technological issues, and hold "pre-semester orientation sessions and brown-bag discussion sessions for instructors teaching in or interested in teaching in the laptop classroom…". They also, in keeping with the focus of the program, utilize various visual means to invite and encourage participation. Outside of the department offices, the DWC has a bulletin board full of photos from digital writing courses, demonstrating both the range of activities that take place in those sections, but also reinforcing their role as community members.

Fig. 8. Digital writing class. http://unixgen.Miami Universityhio.edu/~dwc/mission.htm

The board serves an open invitation for others to join in the process.

Even the posters used to advertise Tea with the DWC reinforce the inclusiveness of the program by addressing common questions and concerns and reinforcing the way in which the digital may be used to facilitate multiple pedagogies. Figure 9 is of a poster image used to advertise a DWC workshop. The text of the poster takes the proverbial bull by the horns in addressing what many instructors, within the field of composition and without, ask – is multimodal composing still writing? Note that the workshop leaders refer to themselves as discussion facilitators, indicating that the focus of the workshop is on examining the question, not prescribing answers.

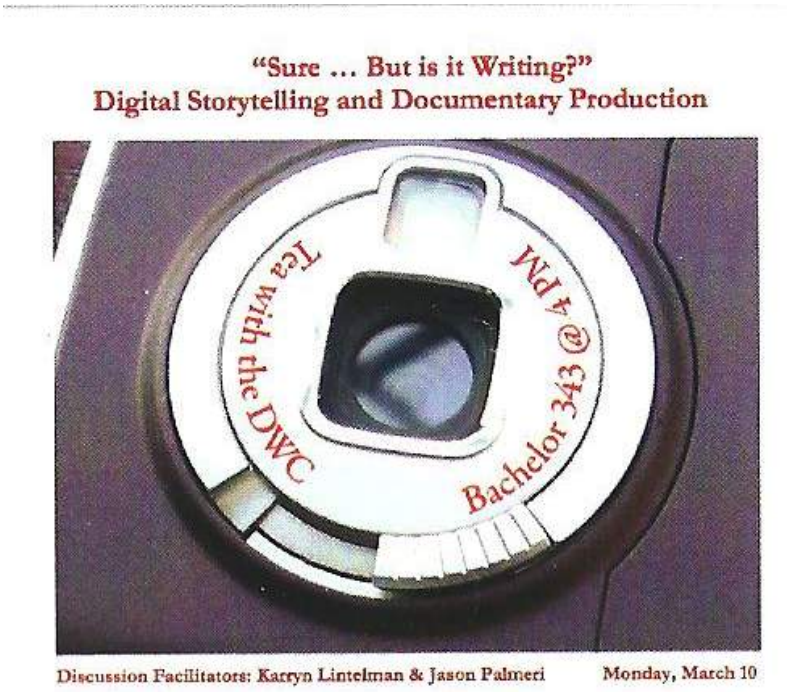


Fig. 9. Poster image advertising a DWC workshop. Courtesy of Jason Palmeri.

The tone of a presentation to an Issues in the Professions class that I observed made it clear that the DWC sought to position itself as looking to be of service to the college community, students and fellow faculty alike. Jason Palmeri, who gave the presentation, did not approach the students and other faculty in a way reminiscent of John

the Baptist, directing fellow faculty or graduate students to join – or else. Rather he positioned working with digital technologies as an option. Not the only option. Simply one of many. He shared what he believed to be the value and possibilities afforded by the digital technologies and resources developed by the DWC, and he offered to support in any way possible anyone who would like to try out inclusion of digital elements in their courses. He made it clear that no one would be bound or cornered. Jason Palmeri observes, "I gave a whole talk about how the digital was transforming each area of English studies - literary studies, creative writing, comp rhet, and really tried to open up a conversation….I think one of the things I really am trying to emphasize is that this is not necessarily just a comp rhet thing".

*Variety*

This ideological positioning was in part responsible for the development of the two-pronged approach. The DWC did not suggest that traditional composition courses should be abandoned, in part because they recognized that "we have 120 sections of writing. There's no way that we could ever get enough laptop classrooms or teachers that are comfortable teaching a digital pedagogy to have every class digital writing" (Lewiecki-Wilson) . Instead the DWC focused on providing as many options for learning and teaching as they could. They paid specific attention to student choice. They recognized that students, for a variety of reasons, may not be interested in taking a digital writing course. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson observes, "one of the things I think that makes students resent taking first-year writing is that it's a required course. And so I was always trying to create more choices….I'm just really trying to develop a sense that students have some choices when they take these classes so that they don't resent them as much".

The idea on the part of the DWC was to create options for students so as to make the course seem more collegiate and interesting. This is a good strategy. The DWC's choice not to immediately push for complete conversion of classes, but rather to keep traditional comp as an option for those students wishing to take such a course, facilitated student ownership and helped create a feeling of open-endedness amongst faculty. Again, no mandates were in place and none were needed. The students came of their own accord, and, as Carolyn Gard says, "voted with their feet". The expectation is that with the conversion of a third classroom to a laptop classroom, just under half of the students taking comp will be choosing to take the digital version. It is anticipated that were the DWC able at this time to offer additional sections, those would no doubt fill. Students are making their choices and generally choosing digital comp, perhaps in part because they know that they don't have to. Student demand may eventually end up providing a motivation for currently reticent faculty to participate.

## Focus on Pedagogies

The DWC faculty repeatedly reiterate that they value the multiple positions, pedagogies, interests and methodologies that are at work and present within the English department. Within the DWC, variety is prized, as one might anticipate from individuals who perceive of communication as multimodal and literacy as multiple. There was no sense in any of my interviews that the DWC was looking to replace or usurp position within the comp program or the department itself. Rather, the DWC presented itself as open and willing to work with any and all pedagogical stances. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson states, "we didn't ever want to get in a position where we force people to teach in an

environment that they were not comfortable with. Our teachers have to be well trained and they have to like it".

The DWC pitched themselves as offering spaces and technological capabilities that had the potential to enhance all instructors' work, and that those instructors were not obligated to subscribe to a specific pedagogy nor were they obliged to affiliate with the DWC or continue an affiliation w/the DWC if they chose to "test the waters" by teaching either a digital writing section or utilizing the laptop or computerized classrooms. Jason Palmeri notes, "I think…What is it that my colleagues want to do in their class? What would they want?....We need to start with their pedagogical objectives…and then talk to them about how the technology can support that". Figure 10 below is of a poster image advertising a workshop addressing the pedagogical uses of digital technologies, in this case, blogs.


Fig. 10. Poster image advertising a DWC workshop. Courtesy of Jason Palmeri.

Mandating participation certainly could have accomplished at least two things. It would have provided a needed teaching cohort to staff additional sections, and it would have moved the program forward more quickly, at least in terms of providing more sections and getting students in the door. But ultimately, I believe, this would have

undermined their efforts. The literature suggests that mandated curricular change fails because there is a mandate, but no accompanying alteration in ideology or pedagogical approach on the part of teachers in the classroom (see Cuban). For curricular innovation to succeed in the long term, there needs to be true buy-in, and true buy-in, buy-in that is authentic and not superficial, is not forced or mandated. Jason Palmeri asserts that, “It’s never required of anyone. It’s entirely voluntary. And that’s as it should be”.

True buy-in, as the DWC subscribes, is invited and supported. And this invitation and support must continue to be extended even in the face of resistance, because it is only through invitation and support for change that resistance to change will fall away, as opposed to simply being hidden. Jason Palmeri observes, “I’m only trying to sell them on the use of technology. I’m not trying to sell them entirely on the particular pedagogical vision I bring. It’s not like I can ever truly separate those, but I do really make an effort to sort of try to separate out what I do in my class versus what the importance of digital technologies can offer to any people out there”.

This is not to say that the DWC does not make their own agenda clear. They are strong in their arguments that Digital Writing is the way of the present and future. They are clear in articulating the value that they perceive. The description of the program posted on the Digital Writing Collaborative webpage states, “The Digital Writing Collaborative seeks to develop and sustain a culture and community of writing, learning, and teaching in all areas of English studies”. The DWC certainly does not work through subterfuge; nor do they try to force anyone to subscribe to their ideological positioning. Jason Palmeri asserts, “I would be worried about trying to force instructors into pedagogies they wouldn’t necessarily want”.

The DWC acknowledges and respects resistance. They attempt to work through it by continuing their work, engaging in discussion, supporting all of their colleagues in their endeavors and ideological positioning, and hoping that more and more of their colleagues will come to recognize the value of the DWC and the potential that it presents for student success and departmental growth. This "I'm OK; You're OK" attitude is demonstrated through both DWC practice and individual action. Heidi McKee observes that she really makes an effort to attend her colleagues' events, in the hope that at some point they will reciprocate, saying that she is "trying to reach out in non-digital ways…I try as much as I can to go to non-digital events my colleagues put on in hopes that some of them might come to digital events". Perhaps through this "non-digital" outreach, a dialogue will be born about the work, and this dialogue might encourage future participation with the DWC, or at the very least result in additional departmental support and respect.

This is not to imply that pedagogy is not central to the DWC's mission. Clearly, they hold strong beliefs about the nature of communication and what skills individuals must possess in order to be successful in contemporary society. As well, they recognize what Miami University needs to be teaching its students in order for the institution to remain credible and become viable as a university of the future. But the decision to focus on the ways in which available technologies and the technological expertise of faculty might enhance existing pedagogies within the department is key to the successful implementation of the curriculum. Michele Polak observes that in order to engage more potential faculty, those faculty can't be scared off by a pedagogy of technologies. She feels that the best strategy is to say "'look, your pedagogy doesn't have to change that

much. You're still teaching composition.'" She notes, "I have a line in my syllabus and I say it on the first day: this is not a class about computers. This is still a composition class. The computers are a tool".

This is a necessary stance from which to proceed. Individual instructor's pedagogies are closely aligned with their worldviews and ideologies. Any direct challenge to these world views would have likely been met with significant resistance. The DWC did not threaten individual world views. Instead they voiced a perspective that validates multiple world views or ideologies and accompanying pedagogies.

The focus on the service to multiple pedagogies, rather than the dismissal of existing pedagogies, diminishes resistance by making it a non-issue. There was no confrontation necessary. Instead coexistence and cooperation were the modus operandi. Aside from neutralizing the potential for direct confrontation, the focus on pedagogies allowed for both the validation of existing pedagogies at the same time as engaging the technological capabilities and faculty support available to many for the first time. It provided an "in" for the technologies, which in turn provided an "in" for potential pedagogical transformation. Pedagogical change cannot be mandated; it must be an open door through which faculty are provided the material and ideological means to walk. Heidi observes about the DWC workshops being offered, that they keep "expanding the topics so that we might draw in more folks from literature and creative writing to come, to just keep encouraging colleagues to think about teaching in the classrooms".

It is interesting to note that Carolyn Gard when working with Heidi on the development of the laptop classrooms, first began by encouraging Heidi to work from the pedagogies that they wished to support, not from the technology itself. She

encouraged Heidi to work from this stance as she dealt with dispirit stakeholders, such as those involved with classroom design. Heidi McKee recalls that,

> She said for me to meet with …the classroom designer and talk pedagogy with him. 'This is what we're envisioning…', and not talk hardware or software or what we might need, but first to talk about the pedagogy we're imagining, and then define the technologies that might help support that pedagogy. She and her group have always put teaching first, and that's been extraordinary.

Begin with the teaching that you want to be able to happen, that you foresee happening. Develop the technologies from that base. This served the DWC's primary objective of addressing literacy as multimodal, both including and through the use of digital technologies.

This is similar in perspective to the strategy that the DWC used when working to involve greater faculty acceptance and participation. Use the technology to facilitate what instructors would like to be doing or able to do in their classrooms, what they would like to be teaching and how they'd like to be teaching in their classrooms. This focus on pedagogical development, and development not of one pedagogy, but of the capacity of the technologies to enhance all pedagogies, and therefore transform pedagogies into those that fulfill the institution's larger mission of global reach and cutting edge educational opportunities for students, has been a key factor in the success of the digital writing initiative. In addition, because digital technologies function as both mode and medium, it might be expected that the use of the technologies will by extension alter pedagogies in ways that are consistent with the ideological underpinnings of the DWC.

## Successful Articulation Strategies

The DWC has facilitated consensus through its ability to successfully articulate not only the theories, pedagogies and practices that it is founded upon, but also to articulate a clear identity that will be easily recognizable within the college community. By articulate, I refer to the ways they have chosen to rhetorically communicate or convey their positions, identity, programs, and ideologies, primarily through the use of language and image. The DWC has made a conscious effort to develop programmatic language that appeals to the widest audience possible. As well, they remain fluid in their self-representation, so as to accommodate the various stakeholder audiences to which they may be presenting themselves at any given time. By fluid, I mean that their message is readily adaptable to a variety of audiences and audience concerns. This attention to articulation was present from the very beginning of the DWC and continues to be actively discussed even as the program continues to grow.

### *The DWC*

All of the GA's that I spoke with noted that the first summer planning session involved significant discussion of language and articulation. Abby Dubisar recalls, "I remember meeting over the summer and kind of forming what we would become…and how we could translate that into prose that described ourselves". The initial summer meeting that was the first step of the DWC began a discussion about how to articulate who they were and what they did and how their presence would benefit the larger Miami community. Michele Polak states that "one of the first things we realized was that there was no accounting for multimodal texts in the department's mission statement. So we collectively, as a group, made a change in the department's mission statement….We

added or revised our mission statement to include multimodal texts". In addition to the mission statement, the initial cohort discussed other issues, such as a name for the group, creating a logo, and developing marketing strategies. "that was another thing that we did as a group collectively; we put together ideas for a logo, and one of the guys from the cohort came up with that logo" (Polak).


Fig. 11. DWC logo. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

Abby Dubisar observes, "We really did get to have this kind of root to trees invention of what it was going to be….that was both represented in our documentation and in other ways that we've represented ourselves through other materials".

*The Digital/Multimodal Divide*

Also during that first summer meeting all members of the original cohort and the program discussed at length the motivation behind their rhetorical choices, particularly the rationale behind the moniker, Digital Writing Collaborative. Heidi McKee remembers that in August of 2006 she met with graduate students and said "we need to have a name for ourselves. We need to have an identity so that people can talk about us". This naming of the initiative was a crucial component, not only in articulating who they were to a wider audience, but particularly in developing institutional consensus. Finding the combination of terms and rhetorical approaches that would engage the various community members integral to the successful implementation of the curriculum was

essential. Eventually the Digital Writing Collaborative was decided upon, but only after much discussion and consideration. The terms used to communicate the curriculum carry meanings and associations that directly impact upon the perception of the program and the individuals involved with the program.

Within the field of composition there is only limited agreement as to what such terms as multimodal, new media, digital, and others mean and materially include. Each term appears for the most part to be adopted or not to serve the contextual need and ideological positioning of the user. In the various conversations that I have had throughout this study with individuals both at Miami University and at other institutions, the issue of articulation has arisen. "Well, what do you mean by multimodal?" and so forth. The process of naming is significant under most circumstances; it is even more so given the lack of consensus within the field regarding terminology.

When I arrived at Miami University and first began interviewing the study participants, one of my first questions was why they chose to call themselves the Digital Writing Collaborative, and why digital writing as opposed to multimodal composition? The answer to this is as complex as the ongoing discussion within the field of Composition Studies surrounding articulation of the values and practices involved with the promotion of multiple literacies.

Heidi McKee recalls, "we had Digital Writing Cooperative…we thought 'well, on this conservative campus it's going to sound too socialist,' and then we realized, 'no, it's truly a collaborative that we're working with', so we went with Digital Writing Collaborative". The choice of writing vs. composition happened as a result of the group's efforts to reach as diverse an audience as possible. Recognizing that language choices

speak to group affiliation and ownership, the decision was made to use writing because writing is 'owned' by a larger segment of the campus population. Composition is a term that is seemingly owned by the field and the discipline of English in general. The DWC wanted to appeal and offer a sense of ownership to those outside of the discipline, and so they chose to use writing as the more common, and again, inclusive term.

The choice of digital over multimodal was framed in a similar way. Abby Dubisar observes, "digital seemed to make sense, whereas multimodality is, I think it's fair to say, an insider terminology". In my experience, 'multimodal' is a term that most, even within the discipline and field are not familiar with. Even those familiar with it can have difficulty explaining the concept and what the practices are that it describes. To many, multimodal seems the antithesis to writing. It seems overly large and unable to afford a clear focus, pedagogically or otherwise. On the other hand, digital is a well-known and understood term. The value of the digital is obvious; we have all been drilled in the theory of our looming technological futures. Heidi McKee notes,

> I think multimodal, one, people don't really understand it or get it. Whereas, they see computers everywhere….So that there's a greater awareness of the need for digitization of one's thinking and writing and communicating. And that the modality is becoming part of it, but I think many people still sort of think of, 'well, this is writing. And over here I'm doing speaking, and yes, I've got a PowerPoint with my speaking, but that's not writing. That's a PowerPoint', you know? So that when you talk about multimodal writing, it just doesn't resonate as much as if you talk about digital writing.

And so digital was, in fact, the term chosen to describe what they do, primarily to facilitate understanding and buy-in. This does not mean that there is no further discussion, but as Jason Palmeri points out, “when I wrote a grant proposal….I went through and removed composing several times so I did not confuse them. Because the Digital Writing Collaborative is our brand, and our brand needs to be consistent”.

Does this mean that they are not engaging in multimodal composition? Of course not. The use of digital environments and technologies facilitates the construction and critique of texts using a variety of modalities. And certainly composition, as both an action and subject of critique, is paramount to the course. For example, during a class that I observed, the instructor was showing a video of a performance by the songstress Fergie. At the same time that the students were listening to and watching the video performance projected from the instructor’s computer onto a large plasma screen, the students also had the lyrics to the song on their laptop screens. In addition, the students had immediate and simultaneous access to blogs on which they were to post comments and discussion.

Now, all of this took place in a digital environment, multiple digital environments actually. The instructor’s video, the students’ page of lyrics, the blog to which they all were assigned to post. But at the same time the content of the lesson was purely a multimodal critique. Both in the sense that the students responded to the lesson verbally, in written form, and digitally via the blog (and perhaps in later assignments or classes via the visual and audio), but also in that the instructor asked students to evaluate and critique all of the various texts being presented in association with the video. The alphabetic text of the lyrics, the visual text of the video, the audio text of the song, the kinesthetic text of the dance and choreography, the architectural text of the set and environment in which

the performance was set, the visual and tactile text of the costumes, and the visual and special text of the stage lighting, the digital text of the video transmission - all of these textual and/or semiotic representations were being critiqued. And it is this critique that will eventually inform not only additional critique of such cultural representations on other occasions, but also the composition of future texts that the students will compose, both in and outside of the classroom. The term digital represents both the means but also a modality of its own. It serves to access other modalities via the use of the digital technologies, but the digital form also offers a means to construct knowledge and identity.

The DWC is aware of this complexity and forthright regarding the motivation behind their articulation. Their objective is to make what they do accessible to those who are on the outside or who do not feel as though they are on the inside. They are also not tied to any specific articulation of value or product. One of the reasons that they have been so successful in developing consensus amongst the various stakeholders that they have encountered in their efforts to implement the curriculum, is because they tailor their articulation for the stakeholder with whom they are communicating. Heidi McKee observes,

> When I was selling this, the big reason we could sell it was the Miami Plan (English 111 and English 112) are the number 1 and number 2 largest enrolled classes on campus. They are the top classes we have, so that was the selling point. Mostly we've been selling it as digital writing and so, for instance, the flyer we gave to the dean had a DWC on it, but the flyer we

> gave to the president and provost in the fall of 2006 did not have the DWC on it. It simply had digital writing.

The faculty in the DWC are very clear that the articulation is not the thing itself; it is the means to an end. And to that end they alter vocabulary use and terminology to suit their targeted audience. As Jason Palmeri comments, “I would call what I’m doing a ham sandwich if it would get me the funding in order to do what I love”.

*Marketing the Brand*

This multiplicity of articulation verbiage and mediums is evident when examining the DWC’s P.R. materials. The multiple means that they use to engage audiences can be seen in the various documents, posters, bulletin boards, etc. that they have used to engage stakeholders. These serve to not only establish the DWC as a marketable brand within the department as well as within the larger community, these forums also showcase the products arising from the DWC’s initiatives”. Michele Polak recalls, “One of the things we did that first semester was, everybody took a class photo. We had a photo taken with our class and we have a bulletin board in the hallway outside the English Department office….That first semester that entire bulletin board was DWC. We had our logo in the middle….every single one of us had our class pictures up there with our classes in that classroom”.

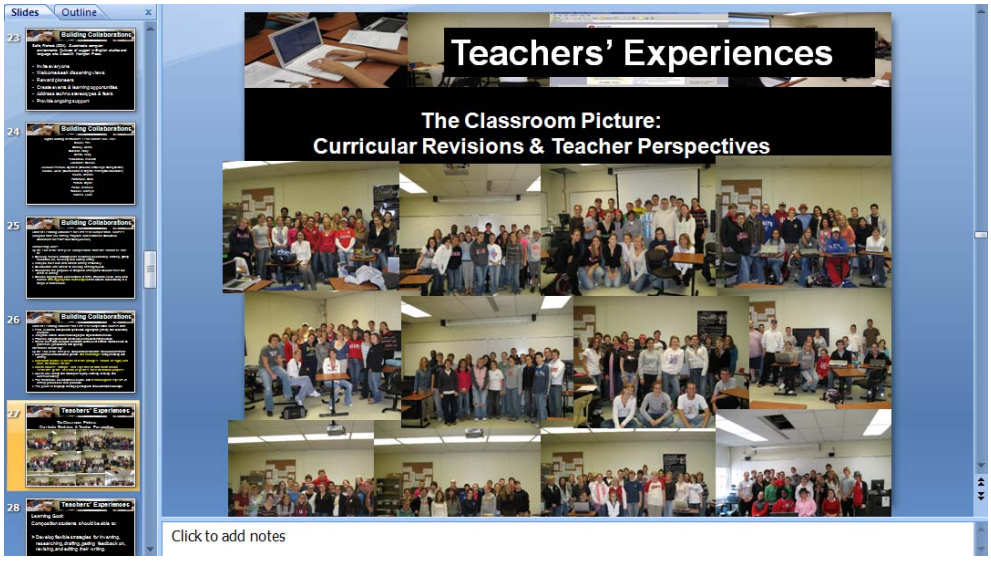


Fig. 12. Photos of digital writing classes. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

Heidi McKee remembers,

> We knew we wanted to have a web presence. I also advocated, again thinking of the traditional, the pragmatic, a bulletin board….Last spring when I brought the president and the provost over here and met with them for an hour and talked with them about how it was going and showed them the classrooms, we actually started at the bulletin board, and it was a great sort of visual thing….And now we can just go to the website and play videos for them…and then we took them down to the classrooms, and they hung out in the classrooms with the students with the laptops doing their assignments.

The DWC also sought to actively engage faculty to participate in the program. Michele Polak observes, "as a group we did workshops….we would put the posters up and it went on the listserve, so you had a lot of people that weren't teaching in the digital classroom

who still had access to it and are now this year teaching in the digital classroom because of it".

This outreach went beyond the English Department and was directed at students as well as faculty and administration "We had a video that was edited together…there were these shots of students in the laptop classroom and instructors teaching students in a laptop classroom and we had it on a big screen….It was at an event in Shriver, which is our student center….We had a table at that event and we showed this PowerPoint and we always had that table manned" (Polak).

Fig. 13. Website image of students working in a digital classroom. http://unixgen.Miami Universityhio.edu/~dwc

Clearly outreach to students will necessitate using modalities with which they are familiar and to which they are more receptive. A video or visual representation will draw students in a way that a pamphlet could not. Jason Palmeri comments, "My students right now are making documentaries and they've been interviewing people and they're like, 'our whole dorm wants to listen to this documentary when it's done'. Which is actually how the sales in the classes are going". In this sense the course product is itself generative.

Articulation of the DWC's objectives, identity and facilities is central to their securing campus wide consensus behind their initiatives. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson notes,

> In the fall of 2006, as we're just starting this, there was a huge celebration at Miami because a donor gave 10.5 million to start the Howe Center for Writing Excellence, Mr. Howe. In the fall there were all of these gala celebrations with the donors, the board of trustees, the president, all of the big money people. Of course, we set up videos of students flashing in the back on the screens, talking about their writing and how important writing was, and we had all of this material. We could really play up and integrate what we were doing. And that also gave us a great deal of cultural capital on campus.

The use of all of the mediums that they have at their disposal, and the thoughtful, and very effective, rhetoric has certainly facilitated the success of the program. However, though many elements contributing to the success of the program happened swiftly, the ongoing process of developing and securing support took time and patience. Because, PowerPoints aside, consensus building occurs only by developing institutional relationships. And relationships take time and patience to build.

One Brick at a Time

Buds open up turning boughs to bowers
all begun by just one bumble bee.
To write with ease symphonies
or at least condati
filled with trills and obblifatti
start with fa sol la ti
leave the rest in the dust
be the best
if you're just content to climb,
one brick at a time.

Jim Dale's lyrics from the Broadway musical *Barnum* aptly describe another reason for the current success of the DWC at Miami University. The participants in the DWC, particularly Heidi McKee and Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, worked to bring about institutional consensus by forming relationships and building institutional bridges slowly, over time. When the process went quickly it was because there happened to be a confluence of events that caused it to do so, not because the instigators were attempting to catapult the curriculum through without forming the consensus necessary for programmatic sustainability.

### *Developing Relationships*

It is clear from the conversations that I had with all of the various stakeholders, as well as from the documents that I was able to gain access to, that the process of building consensus around the curriculum was predicated upon hard work, thoughtful preparation, and a willingness to work with individuals in order to facilitate the curricular vision. No one ever reported any sense of being pressured. What all reported was that the process of consensus building was in actuality a process of relationship building. It was through the development of the relationships that progress was made. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson notes "so much of this was Heidi going to all of these different people and making a pitch…She and I did a lot of collaborative work writing different proposals, writing budgets, going to different offices to make our pitch". Heidi recalls, "just taking the time to go and meet people, and 'oh no, I'll come over to your office'. And here I am at the office with someone in IT who normally is always having to schlep himself all over to campus, and now is having someone who's really interested in involving them fully in helping us design the best possible learning space".

These relationships allowed for shared resources. These relationships allowed for acquisition of funding. It was the focus on relationships and a process grounded in patience and development that paradoxically facilitated its rapid growth. The curriculum appears to have happened in part because there was a willingness to move slowly, one brick, or step, at a time. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson observes that in so far as funding was concerned, “there wasn’t one place on campus where we got the money. There wasn’t one strand here. There were a lot of different strands”. Despite the fact that the DWC was advocating a curricular innovation that served the larger interests of the institution, the process involved accessing diverse stakeholders on campus and establishing relationships with those stakeholders. And once relationships were established, piecing together support as in piecing together a puzzle.

Heidi McKee refers to this slow building process and the success it generated as “the power of the personal, the persistent and the partial”.

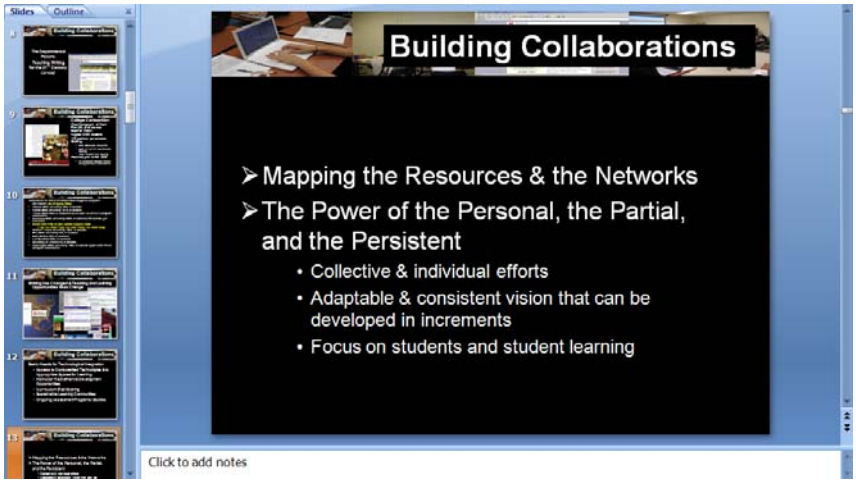


Fig. 14. The four P’s. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

She advocates working personally with individuals and developing relationships, not allowing short term obstacles to derail potential success, and working with what is at hand, or perhaps more aptly, making what is at hand work. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson

points out that they didn't get all of the classrooms at once, "the first one was in 2006…we added a new laptop class this fall, and we're adding a new one next year". She also recalls that though they were turned down for a grant at one point, the process of developing the grant had other, more important, byproducts. "We connected with various people across the university…So we put ourselves on the map…" (Lewiecki-Wilson).

The DWC didn't demand or need all sections, all GA's, all classrooms. Heidi McKee observes, "sometimes you just sort of drop the word or the idea into the network and let it diffuse slowly, and it does, you know". They didn't need everybody to buy-in RIGHT NOW. They just needed one classroom to begin. One cohort. Partial buy-in. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson observes, "I just think you just have to patiently work with those people to build bridges". All the DWC asked for was enough to form a foundation. They would build from that. And the building blocks, so to speak, were the individuals involved in creating institutional relationships that would foster innovation. Paul Anderson observes, "there's a way in which they themselves are engaged in faculty development in a small way, but an important way – as in a beginning way".

This work to build bridges has been generative for the program in other ways as well. It has created a sort of relational infrastructure for other members of the DWC. Jason Palmeri notes, "I think I have been very blessed that those relationships were already built. I have the interface with IT. I didn't have to convince them to pay attention to us. That had already been done. I just had to say, 'I'm Heidi's colleague. I'm stepping into the role', and they were nice to me.

## Assessment

One of the factors contributing to the institutional consensus behind the DWC has been their commitment to engaging in immediate and ongoing assessment. The importance of assessment on an institutional basis is not such a surprise. As stated earlier, Miami University has a very successful approach toward institutional and programmatic assessment. Working from that foundation, the DWC has also developed a successful assessment plan. The plan has served not only to solidify support amongst stakeholders, but it has also served to provide material for marketing the DWC brand – both of which are necessary in order to maintain institutional consensus behind the curriculum.

### *Developing a Plan*

Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson was instrumental in developing the assessment plan for the DWC. She notes that she had "developed a full-cycle assessment plan for the first-year writing program", observing that when she came into the directorship "we were owing some assessments to them that hadn't been done in a long time". She notes that prior to this the composition program really hadn't developed a strong assessment process, and as a result, she "joined a university assessment team for a couple of years to think about different ways of assessing and a more full-cycle assessment that's more multi-factorial and that has different elements to it". This facilitated her anticipated participation in the departmental assessment. However, it also served to help her make a case for continued support of the program. Cindy observes that, "one of the ways that we sold to the president and the provost when they came to see our classrooms, the first thing they said is 'Well, how are you going to prove the kind of things you're asking? That

students are really learning here and that they're learning traditional skills. How are you going to show us that?'"

The assessment plan for first-year writing provided a model for the assessment plan for first-year digital writing. In addition to the use of pre and post student attitude surveys, the DWC's use of direct assessment of both traditional and digital sections allowed the DWC to establish a point of comparison between digital and non-digital courses. This ability to compare to traditional courses would become crucial. Cindy points out that,

> We developed an assessment plan for the digital writing classes that luckily could model the larger assessment plan I had done for all first-year composition courses, and that could be a base of comparison because the year before we had selected a systematic sampling from one hundred and twenty sections. What was interesting was, after we completed our assessment at the end of 2006-2007, we found that students were learning at the same level in the digital classes as the traditional ones.

The assessment provided the kind of proof that matters to administrators and other campus stakeholders, including parents. This ability to prove validity helped to secure campus support in a variety of ways.

### *Proof and Goodwill*

On a very fundamental level, the DWC's willingness to participate in assessment efforts garnered the goodwill of the Chair of the department. He notes that when he had to write the program review in 2006, it was the comp rhet folks, including DWC folks who worked with him throughout the summer in developing the programmatic review

and report. “Everybody went home for the summer, except the people who volunteered to help me write the program review study…. And as it happened those people were almost exclusively rhetoric and composition faculty” (Tuma). The program review ended up being so good, that the English Department won a bonus from the university. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson recalls that,

> We went through this big program review in 2006 and we had a fabulous program review. We, in fact, won the university award. The department got a $20,000.00 bonus for the best program review. And the digital writing played a big role in that. And the assessment played a big role. Those two were really key because we were way ahead of the other departments in assessing all of our programs. The people in the department, like the chair, saw that this was going to be really good for the department’s reputation.

It was also very important that the DWC began curricular assessment almost immediately. Dick Pettitt noted that part of his deal with the DWC was that they’d complete some sort of assessment process. He observes, “That was my big question, it was always will these guys assess? Will they actually find some data one way or the other?” He notes that assignment of prototype classrooms was by application and that a requirement was completion of some sort of formal assessment, though very few faculty actually followed through on the assessment. As a result he was skeptical that the members of the DWC would complete an assessment. “But it was interesting to me that they actually did do a pre and post assessment. And the data was persuasive to me. So I

feel better. It is still expensive as all get out….Those are the kind of things that I think about that persuade me that it's a good investment" (Pettitt).

The willingness to assess and follow through on commitments in itself earned his goodwill and recognition that they were a program worth fostering through continued support. Carolyn Gard notes, "They've had two years of assessment. They planned assessment first very, very carefully, at a very detailed level. They've just thought through everything so thoroughly and followed up and done it". Certainly the follow through and planning are impressive to most stakeholders; however, the ability to prove student success is ultimately the key to sustainability of the program.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the centrality of assessment is the comment from the current president of Miami University, David Hodge. In response to the question of sustainability, his response was that "the DWC needs to show that it is an effective way to engage and educate our students….it is critical for the program to demonstrate not only that students are facile in these media, but that being facile contributes to their ability to express themselves through the analysis and presentation of critical material" (email interview). The single most compelling rationale for the existence of the program is the success it affords students in an academic environment and beyond. The DWC's willingness to engage in ongoing assessment in order to demonstrate just this success, is the surest way to prove their value and convince stakeholders to continue their support.

The DWC is considering expanding their assessment practices to include assessment designed to gauge faculty response to students' expanding skill base and the impact that this may have on classroom performance. On a more local level, the DWC

also offers workshops designed to assist faculty in assessing multimodal texts. The DWC poster image represented in Figure 15 once again acknowledges faculty concerns outright, in this case the sturm and drang associated with assessing compositions utilizing multiple modalities.

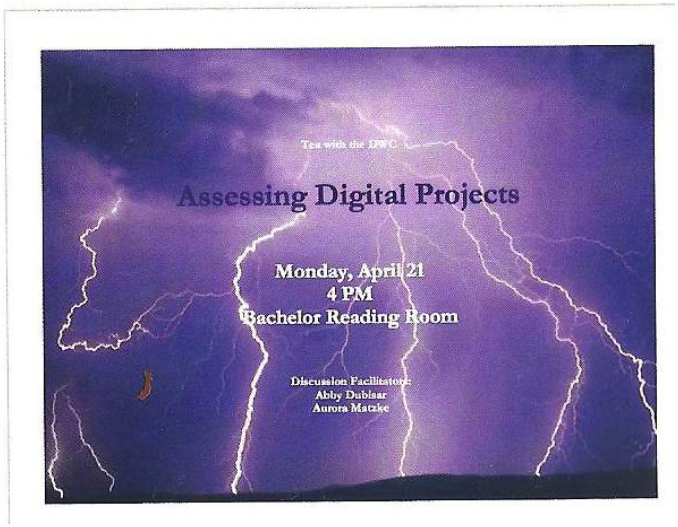


Fig. 15. DWC poster advertising an assessment workshop. Courtesy of Jason Palmeri

As well, the DWC continues to expand the current assessment process. In addition to the pre and post tests, the students are now interviewed on videotape in order to determine and demonstrate students' response to the digital sections and their feelings about the work that they'd done throughout the semester. Students present themselves and their work in a variety of ways, including bringing in texts, print and otherwise, and analyzing them on camera. This provides a series of testimonials of sorts for use by the DWC in their ongoing consensus developing efforts.

### *Byproducts of Assessment*

The assessment process also provides another byproduct. The videotaped interviews provide another P.R. tool in their campaign to promote both the DWC and the

pedagogies at play. Heidi McKee notes, “we also knew we needed some cool stuff – well, to put it bluntly – we needed some cool stuff to be able to put on the web to be able to show potential donors, to be able to recruit students or parents thinking about this” By engaging the same skills that they are attempting to inculcate in their students, by creating a multimodal assessment product, they open doors to the entire community. Few on the campus, and certainly outside of the campus community, would sit down to read the assessment process and results. But most would be willing to watch them. This form of programmatic assessment has the potential to assist the DWC in their efforts to build additional institutional consensus, as well as market the value of their product to other members of the larger Oxford, Ohio and parental communities.

Clearly the folks in the DWC and Miami University engaged in a series of “right moves” as they went about developing institutional consensus and cooperation in support of the multimodal composition curriculum. They capitalized upon a history of innovation. They espoused an ideology of inclusivity. They were able to maintain a focus on pedagogical aims. They developed successful articulation strategies. They were patient in their efforts and worked to build community relationships that would facilitate their efforts. And most importantly, they engaged in immediate and ongoing assessment practice designed to prove their worth and continued institutional viability. There is much for the composition community to learn from these actions. But the final curricular outcome is not predetermined. There still remain challenges to sustainability. In the following chapter I will examine some of these challenges and the steps that the DWC and Miami University are taking to ensure that the digital curriculum remains viable and supported on into the future.

# CHAPTER 6: ISSUES OF RESISTANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Though for the moment all seems well at Miami University for the DWC, its longevity is not assured. As with any curricular innovation, there are challenges to sustainability to be faced and areas of institutional resistance to be addressed. In order for the DWC to remain viable they will need to confront a number of challenges, including procuring ongoing funding, obtaining and maintaining additional instructional facilities, hiring and retaining additional DWC faculty, securing institutional reward for participation in the DWC , and attending to the historical ideological split between literature and composition present in English departments. In order for institutional consensus to be maintained and for this curricular innovation to succeed in the long-term, a formal plan for sustainability must be developed and agreed upon amongst stakeholders.

## Shared Resources

Though perhaps not the greatest challenge to sustainability, funding is always an ongoing concern, particularly when involving curricular development requiring ongoing technological enhancement. Associate Provost Dick Pettitt notes the rate at which technologies often need to be replaced and wonders where the money will come from. " I remember as we sat down and started planning…I was really nervous about the amount of money that it was going to cost to do it….It's still a major concern right now" (Pettitt). The ability to replace plasma screens, for instance, may pose problems in the future. This particular technology tends to have a short life span. And plasma screens are not low cost items. "I'm still nervous about when those plasma screens start to go. Where's all the money going to come from?" (Pettitt). The screens, though, are not the only replacement

concern. Other technologies will need to be replaced and newer technologies purchased. Pettitt hopes that in the future newer, and perhaps less expensive, options will present themselves. “That’s where my hope is. That technology costs…will keep going down so that we don’t have to continually spend that kind of money” (Pettitt). But for now, he is left waiting for the new plasma screens to get old or become outdated and wondering how soon he will need to come up with the funds to replace the older technologies.

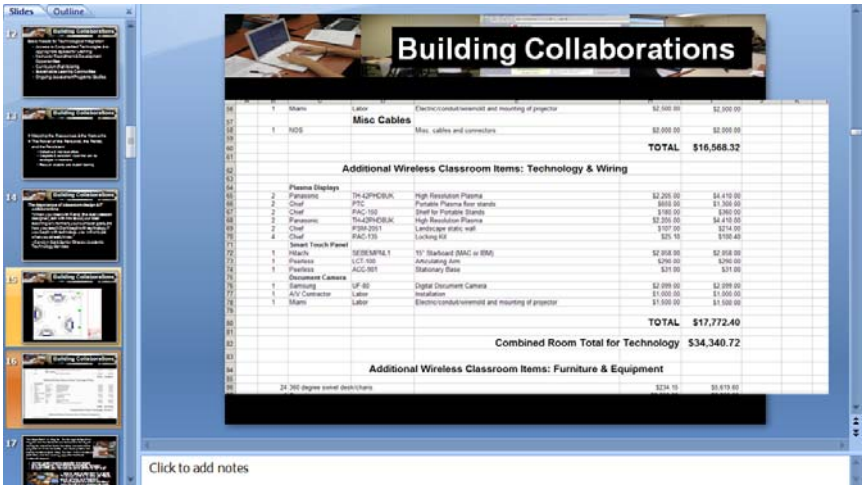


Fig. 16. IT budget for initial classroom conversions. Power Point courtesy of Heidi McKee.

When it comes to instructional technologies, it isn’t so much about the cash, as about the cash flow. Funding will be available, but how much and how often remain of concern. Pettitt observes that the cash flow is contingent upon a number of issues, including the consensus of the CEC to allocate funds to specific initiatives. He notes, “It’s still a little problematic if the head of PFD says, ‘I just don’t agree with that. I’ve got a different priority for that money this year’. Then we might be in trouble….So that’s really the challenge to keeping it moving down the road, or if the technology people get a big cut in the budget, which is possible”.

Citing changes in resources at the state level and an economy that is worrisome, stakeholders recognize the tenuousness of the initiatives currently being undertaken. "Most people don't think of Miami as a state school….We're not in terrible shape, but we're not going to be able to do what we planned to do because we've got a new governor. He wants to hold tuition" (Pettitt). Carolyn Gard concurs, "I think the biggest challenge for the future is going to be maintaining the budget….the budget situation is really going to be the toughest thing, because we've got the tuition capped". She observes that

> We're justifying budgets at a much more detailed level for 09 than I've ever seen. Anywhere. So I don't know how that will play out…the biggest challenge will be maintaining enough budget allocated to take a classroom to the next level. To be able to make decisions to do things like this. That's going to be the hardest challenge next year for me. And I think for all of the campus.

Gard cautions that the ability to continue funding the DWC initiatives and constructing laptop classroom spaces has implications for the campus as a whole. "Without something like the English Department, you don't have anything to show faculty as to what's possible". Though there are additional concerns to be addressed, from the perspective of the stakeholders who handle funding, Pettitt notes, "I don't know that I see sustainability issues that concern me beyond the cost".

However, cash flow also impacts upon physical resources. As mentioned in Chapter 4, physical infrastructures can only be amended to a certain extent; the basic structures remain despite changes in technologies, pedagogies and institutional

ideologies. There is only so much space to go around. Will the DWC be able to acquire classroom space to facilitate the expansion of the program? What happens when the walls really do need to come down? More importantly, will there be institutional agreement? Higher education is being forced to re-imagine itself. This re-imagining may well include a reconfiguration of what a university looks like, how the actual architectural and geographic spaces will need to function. Keith Tuma observes that the institutional commitment is in place, noting that the Provost and the Dean are "both interested in public humanities and in digital writing and digital humanities, and they have thought about the future of the university as a university without walls". For now the question is, where can we get more spaces for digital classrooms and digital support services, and the funds to continue to outfit them? Hopefully, the DWC will continue to maintain the relationships that allowed access to the physical spaces and funding sources necessary.

Paul Anderson notes that, "Getting the right kinds of spaces made for the kinds of things they do is going to be really important…The spaces they have now…are not ideally suited for what they are doing. They're doing really well in what they've got, but what they've got isn't what they would ideally have". This distinction between the do-able and the ideal goes beyond instructional space. Jason Palmeri notes how important it could be to the DWC if they owned a space out of which to work.

> I really want to have a space for a teaching community, and I would say that is the one thing that has been hard here, because we don't have a space….I came from an institution where we had a technology pedagogy space where staff could help you out, but also it just had couches and computers, and people could come and eat their lunch there and we would

> show each other interesting things … or help each other informally….If we had an office and … people could just stop by and work…we could just mentor them while they worked…and this might increase our numbers of instructors.

Keith Tuma hopes that additional resources are on the horizon. “There’s a new humanities center in the college, and I think it will provide a source of funding and research support for a number of digital initiatives, including the Digital Writing Collaborative”. The DWC will not only have to maintain relationships that currently exist, but also develop relationships with new entities on campus in order to ensure ongoing institutional collaboration in meeting the goal of programmatic sustainability.

Despite concerns about funding and facilities, it appears that upper administration is committed to maintaining the digital initiatives already underway. Provost Herbst, noting that much of the infrastructure has already been established, states, ‘I do not foresee major problems with sustainability”. As well, President Hodge observes, “The main challenge is success. The DWC needs to show that it is an effective way to engage and educate our students”. The DWC will need not only to continue to demonstrate their success, but also continue to maintain their relationships with funding sources and stakeholders in charge of budget allocation, and, as well, continue to engage in the activities that encourage support from those funding sources, if they hope to continue furthering the program.

### Human Resources

Perhaps a larger concern, at least on the part of the faculty involved in the DWC, is how to secure and support the human resources needed to continue the program into

the future. As it stands, DWC faculty members receive little if any compensation for most of the work that they do for the digital writing program. This is not an unusual occurrence. Instructors breaking ground in the field of multimodal composition often get little to no formal institutional recognition of either their efforts or their expertise. Anderson, et al. note that "78 percent (n=29) reported there being no institutional reward for learning new technologies", with only 16 percent reporting that they received monetary compensation and only 8 percent of respondents saying that they received course releases for engaging in such work (75). As yet, there is a digital divide in academia. "Scholars who compose (or want to compose) multimodal texts to advance knowledge in the field still face significant hurdles as to whether such work will count towards tenure or promotion" (Anderson, et al. 79). Though most in academia recognize the shift that is occurring from print to digitally based representation of knowledge, hiring and tenure committees are interested primarily in print scholarship, not online scholarship.

In Miami University's case this is not only an issue of equity and compensation for service. Without faculty willing to commit their own time and energy, there will be no one to teach the courses, much less continue to develop the program. When asked to identify what would need to happen in order to secure the sustainability of the DWC, Keith Tuma stated that "the number one thing is faculty, because the university is only as good as its faculty". All members of the DWC have spoken to the amount of administrative time and effort that has been involved in the development of the digital writing program. All have spoken of the lack of material incentive for the work they are doing. All have spoken to the amount of time taken – time that for non-tenured faculty

might be better spent on the "money" activity – print publishing. When asked why he thought that more English instructors had not chosen to teach in the digital writing program, Jason Palmeri commented "I don't think that there's a great sense of institutional reward for having done that".

The issue goes beyond faculty teaching the courses. An even more pressing issue is the time spent administering the program and engaging in all of the actions that have thus far enabled the program to exist. Heidi McKee notes that there has been some success in obtaining support for faculty, though it is far from enough to sustain the program. "If we had not gotten the half-time TA this past year, and if we don't have the GA coming next year, we would be harder pressed because it would be riding almost exclusively on my shoulders and Jason's shoulders….We would burn out….It would have eventually killed Jason and me". The success and sustainability of any program can't rest upon individual faculty. This is certainly the case if there is any expectation that the program is to expand and work on an interdisciplinary basis throughout the university. Paul Anderson observes that "the university or the department are going to have to figure out how to make someone's time available to provide leadership on an ongoing basis" noting that the program needs "administrative continuity, and you can't do that on a volunteer basis". If the DWC and digital writing program are to continue, then there must be some sort of compensation for all of the faculty development occurring, administration of program, relationship building, and marketing of the program.

Most of the stakeholders at Miami University identified lack of human resources or compensation for faculty as a significant challenge to sustainability. No matter how

much faculty members might believe in the curricular innovation they are attempting, if they do not have compensation for and tangible recognition of the work, they, as individuals, will not be able or willing to sustain their efforts on behalf of the institution. This area may be where the DWC must commit the most time and energy in developing institutional consensus, as this is the most immediate threat to programmatic sustainability.

## Historical Ideological Conflicts

A significant issue of resistance, though less of a threat to sustainability, is one that has fewer solutions. The historical schism between two faculties of English – the literature faculty and the composition faculty, poses a problem and is an issue at Miami Univeristy as at many institutions. The modern university is based on the German model. Brereton observes that "in 1876 Johns Hopkins University was founded on the German model and overnight became the single most potent force for upgrading the educational standards of American scholarship" (5). He goes on to note that both rhetoric and writing instruction were missing from this model, stating that "German…universities simply did not teach composition" (6).

This German model is predicated upon a disciplinary structure. Within this structure literature held a position of primary importance within English departments. This structure remained in effect until recently; now composition and creative writing hold significant positions, both within departments, but also, particularly composition, within the university construct. Keith Tuma notes that at Miami University, "Literary studies had historically been the unmarked, but obvious center of our department here, as

in many nationwide". This circumstance is changing at Miami University, as it also is throughout the country.

Comp has often been seen as the less valuable of the areas in English departments. It has sometimes been perceived as serving primarily as a cash cow for English departments, bringing in the numbers of students and resultant funding for positions in the other fields of English – literature, creative writing, occasionally journalism. This has also been the case at Miami University. Tuma recalls that he was told when he arrived at Miami,

> That it was the introduction of a two semester course in composition that saved the department of English at Miami in the 1960's. It saved the department in the sense that it saved its staffing. If you don't have courses to teach you don't have a reason for a faculty. Putting college composition into the core of university and college of arts and sciences requirements enabled us to keep one of the largest faculties on campus.

The ability to provide cash flow has often been perceived as composition's only worth, in part because many literature instructors feel that they indeed do teach students how to write in their courses and so function as de facto composition instructors. As well, composition has generally been perceived of as an introductory course for first-year students designed in many cases to remediate.

Composition has also traditionally been perceived as a service course within the academy. The historical model since the 1800's has been that literature instructors would groan and agree to serve by taking on the thankless task of writing instruction. Brereton asserts that composition has been historically viewed as a "kind of teacher slavery –

relentless correction and strict supervision of writing" and that 'teaching composition was an entry level job, one to leave behind after acquiring seniority" (18). As a service oriented field, and one which did not enjoy a tremendous amount of institutional prestige or respect, composition was generally seen as tertiary to literature and creative writing.

That situation has all changed. Graff asserts that

> About a century ago, universities imagined the world of knowledge as a kind of immense pyramid that was built by a process in which each specialist added a brick or two to the growing edifice of objective truth. With the collapse of this positivistic view of knowledge in the early twentieth century, scholars and educators have increasingly come to see the world of knowledge as resembling a dynamic conversation rather than as an accumulation of discrete bricks of fact.

In addition to, and perhaps in part because of, the rise of a more interdisciplinary ideological positioning, the modern university is becoming a more and more commercialized institution. The focus on marketplace ideology now at work in the university has made it impossible to maintain the old structures. Glenn Platt observes that "there are the inevitable fixed pie questions that have come up, and people don't like talking about those in academia….It's this German model that's a couple hundred years old with discipline based silos….That academic model of knowing more and more about less and less….That model just goes out…That really freaks people out. Understandably".

Literature, which in the past has been seen as the historical center of the humanities, has moved from the center of the discipline to, at the very least, a shared

center, though some might argue it has moved to the periphery. Tuma observes that, "within the humanities, literary studies in the heyday of theory had an imperial moment. You might say that it's now experiencing a post-imperial moment. Rhetoric and composition and writing studies and creative writing are on the other side of that, on the way up". Composition studies have to a large extent moved to the center of the discipline of English.

The rise of composition as a field has caused a shift in the power dynamics at universities. With the advent of what I would term the "new composition", comp has risen in esteem on many college campuses, not only because of the cash flow composition programs provide, but also because composition has become a vibrant field, producing valuable scholarship and addressing significant faculty concerns regarding student preparedness in basic communication skills. Comp is the new "it girl" of academia. As such, resources are shifting. This is true throughout the academy; resources move with the times and demand for specific areas of study. But in this case the shift is both a monetary and ideological one, and it has meant to a certain extent the decentralization of literature and the move to center of composition studies.

When asked about any resistance encountered in developing the digital writing curriculum, the general consensus amongst stakeholders at Miami University was that though not overtly resistant, the literature faculty members are, by and large, ambivalent about the DWC and digital writing program. This ambivalence has manifested not in any sort of outright refusal to participate or support, but more so in a seeming lack of interest in the DWC and what they are attempting to do in the department. Heidi McKee observes

“We have so much more support for the digital writing across campus, more support than we have in the department.

This may be in line with the current state of affairs in English departments and is most likely a reflection of a fear of resource shifting and loss of institutional prestige to the new kid on the block. Tuma notes that this resistance is not “owing to any form of technophobia”. Rather, it is in response to shifting departmental hierarchies and accompanying shifts in resources. Heidi McKee echoes this, commenting, “our own colleagues who aren’t in digital studies, sometimes, I think, fear that they’re being positioned as not worthy anymore…and that’s not it at all”.

However, the fear of shifting resources and diminished institutional consideration is not totally unjustified. Tuma points out that “it’s easier to convince administrators and the public of the value of writing instruction than it is to tell them that literary studies should matter to them, even if it should, as I believe it should”. Understanding and addressing the legitimate fear of shifting resources that faculties face is central to engaging institutional change. Glenn Platt notes that, ‘you’ve got to be empathetic to the underlying fears that are driving a lot of resistance both within and outside of an English Department….because it’s not irrational. I understand why they feel that way…so you’ve got to understand where those pain points are and then try to address them in ways that are not threatening”.

In order to ensure sustainability, the members of the DWC will have to cultivate the other members of the department, and vice versa. This is echoed by Paul Anderson who observes that “it would be good to see them move into more areas of the English Department”. It is apparent that the DWC are attempting to do so already. My sense,

though, is that this is not so much because they see the literature/comp divide as a threat to sustainability, but rather because they hold to an ideology of inclusivity as mentioned in Chapter Five.

It can be hoped that this ideology, combined with the patience already evidenced, will facilitate the building of relationships within the English department, just as it has outside of the department and across the institution as a whole. As well, it behooves the literature faculty to explore what the DWC is attempting to do. Tuma, in referring to the literature faculty, comments, "the point locally was not to diminish the latter, but to make sure that equal respect was given to everything we do as a department, with the hope that more conversation among our sub-disciplines would improve the work in all of them". If literature faculties throughout the university wish to retain their worth in a changing academic culture, initiatives such as the DWC have much to offer, including perhaps a revitalized perspective of what literature will look like, constitute, and be constituted of in the future. There is value for all parties in the curricular actions of the DWC.

## Planning for Sustainability

Though there does not seem to be a formal plan in place, the members of the DWC have put thought to what is necessary in order to develop and sustain the program. They recognize that on an institutional level, little can be done to amend equity issues if there is not formal recognition of the program by way of titles for members. Heidi McKee observes that other similar programs have designated directors, and certainly the DWC should also have a director, but she feels that the title of director must also be accompanied by compensation, of which there is little to none at present. She is lobbying hard to get titular recognition for the coordinator of the DWC, reasoning that formal

administrative recognition is the pathway to addressing salary and compensation issues. She states, “we would like some official administrative recognition, and that will help sustain us as a faculty, and that can keep it going”. This may prove to be an uphill battle, as Jason Palmeri cautions, “that is always the challenge, getting people to support the human support aspect of it”.

Another effort to sustain the DWC faculty has been to secure administrative assistance by way of hiring graduate assistants. Heidi notes that “we’ve got the TA’s and the GA. Those are going to help hugely….If we had not gotten the half time TA this past year, and if we didn’t have the GA coming next year, we would be harder pressed, because it would be riding almost exclusively on my shoulders and Jason’s shoulders. We have dedicated graduate students, but they keep rolling through”. Securing compensation for existing faculty and hiring additional faculty and staff to offset the workload are integral to the continued development of the DWC.

The DWC faculty are also contemplating the possibility of moving the DWC towards obtaining formal institutional designation as a program within the English Department. This would also help solidify the DWC in a variety of ways, including opening more doors to funding and resources. Designation of the DWC as a formal program and ascribing the title of ‘director’ to the individual administering the program will provide formal institutional sanction and the cultural capital that is needed for the DWC to survive regardless of inevitable administrative or organizational shifts.

Another element in the DWC’s efforts towards sustainability is their present push to get courses cross-listed with other departments and to count for credit for other than the general education requirement. Jason Palmeri notes, “We’re working on getting more

electives in English, so that way we can reach a broader population and make sure it will also get to count for a general education requirement". The DWC is looking to develop their course offerings and 'build up'. They are presently fielding a 200 level course and are hoping to develop additional upper level courses. Heidi McKee observes, "I'm looking to get that name more out there, particularly because the Digital Writing Collaborative is not just going to be first-year writing. It's going to be scaffolding up, like the education class we have going, and other IMS classes. We're looking to expand from our base now".

Jason Palmeri observes that the support across campus is already quite strong. He states, "that was certainly huge in my decision to come here. I could see that based upon what they had already done. And since I've been here I've definitely found that's the case". Keith Tuma notes that he, in his new capacity as Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities, has

> Been given the task of breaking down some of the walls between departments in the humanities, and because writing works across disciplines, writing in all of its forms and technologies should remain important in that…I think there are a lot of opportunities for bringing other people from other departments into this conversation about digital writing and digital humanities, which should have the effect of securing its foothold.

Miami University's interest in interdisciplinarity should facilitate this, Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson notes that "Miami likes to be interdisciplinary. …that's one of the great things

about this campus….People work together, and we really just have a great history of that".

Central to any sustainability initiative would also be to expand the digital writing offerings available to students, perhaps converting exclusively to digital writing and suspending traditional courses if the demand supports it. Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson does not foresee this; she believes that there will always be a demand for traditional composition courses. Other stakeholders are not so sure. Whether the program ever goes exclusively digital remains to be seen; still the expansion of the digital sections will certainly help to ensure sustainability, in part by ensuring that there will be students skilled and prepared to take upper division digital/multimodal offerings.

\ Perhaps the most significant effort towards sustainability is the DWC's commitment to ongoing assessment. Assessment has proven to be a cornerstone of the initiative. It will continue to be so on into the extended future. Assessment not only engenders trust amongst the stakeholders and reifies the stakeholders' choices to extend support and funding, it also demonstrates that the commitment to the curriculum is real and ongoing. Additionally, it is only via developing "proof" that the DWC will be able to convince any stakeholders withholding support or acceptance. And in academia, such proof must take certain forms. The DWC is wise to have engaged in formal, institutionally recognized assessment practices and to have continued to have done so. Their voiced interest in expanding the reach of their assessment practice will also serve to solidify the program. It is important not only to prove the value that the program holds for students, but also to measure the degrees and ways in which the program is of value to the wider campus faculty. At some point in the future, assessing to what degree the skill

sets taught in digital courses impact upon the viability of job seekers in the business community would certainly prove valuable. And if the results do, in fact, demonstrate an association, this would certainly facilitate support from other stakeholders, such as industry and the business sector.

## Happy Coincidences and Walking the Walk

It cannot be denied that the individuals who co-founded the DWC benefitted from a series of, what I would call, happy coincidences. There were a variety of administrative changes taking place that resulted in a number of individuals coming to power with innovative agendas and an interest in putting themselves forward to the campus community as visionary leaders. As well, the push to get Miami Notebooks into the hands of all incoming freshman certainly provided a helpful technological boost, and a more important relational boost, by allowing the laptop initiative to have immediate relevance and application opportunities for students, thus making the initiative more readily justified and saleable. Additionally, it didn't hurt that the IT folks had money that literally had to be spent. This allowed the DWC to, in a sense, ride in and save the day by offering a really interesting and viable project upon which the funds could be spent. The 'you rub my back and I'll rub yours' agreement with IMS that resulted in another computerized classroom is another example of the sort of confluence of circumstance and events that the DWC capitalized upon.

All of this was helpful certainly. And more importantly, none of this is exclusive to Miami University. We have all in academia found the same sort of circumstances. Sometimes we have been able to capitalize on them, sometimes not. The message we should take from Miami University's experience with these happy coincidences is to

firstly, look for them at our own institutions, and secondly, if they aren't there, look to make them manifest. There is something to be said for the *Field of Dreams* adage, "if you build it they will come".

But there is and was more to it than this. Yes, success came in part due to the way in which the DWC worked to address all of those long-standing challenges we encounter when we seek to innovate: finding money; developing faculty buy-in; activating the institutional ideologies that will facilitate success and minimizing those that contribute to failure; working with, and sometime around, physical infrastructures; discovering other visionaries within the institution and soliciting their assistance; finding means to support the technologies and faculty working with those technologies; creating a team and not relying on one person around which to center the innovation process. Additionally, the DWC worked successfully to tap into a history of innovation; they focused on pedagogies – plural; they developed successful articulation strategies; they worked diligently and patiently to develop the kinds of institutional relationships that would sustain their efforts; they embraced assessment from the start.

However, and perhaps most importantly, they did not just talk the talk; they walked the multiliteracies walk. The individuals involved in advancing this innovative curriculum behaved in a manner consistent with the values espoused by the theory and activated in the pedagogy. Multiliteracies pedagogy focuses on multiplicity and agency. The pedagogy and supporting theory advance that literacy is multiple: multicultural, multimodal, based upon multiple intelligences and ways of thinking. The NLG put forth the pedagogy of multiliteracies with an agenda of increased agency for all, with an agenda of inclusion and not exclusion. They state, "access to wealth, power, and symbols

must be possible no matter what the identity markers, such as language, dialect, and register, a person happens to have….This is the basis for a cohesive sociality; a new civility in which differences are used as a productive resource and in which differences are the norm" (NLG 15). The members of the DWC, though not addressing the more political aspects of their actions directly, nonetheless engaged in their relationship building, teaching, and innovating in a way that was consistent with the values of the pedagogy upon which much of their work is based and from which their work draws.

The members of the DWC and most all of the other stakeholders that I interviewed engaged in the action of innovating the curriculum and building consensus around that innovation in a way that was inclusive and that sought to create extension for the entire community. Their actions, whether conscious or not, embodied the values inherent in the theory from which this curricular innovation draws. This offers a lesson to all of us that is too often forgotten in the highly politicized world of academia. We must remember the values we hold and act upon them in all we do, with all whom we engage. We cannot become Machiavellian, in part because we are, in academia, supposed to be better than that, but also because it does not serve us well. Innovation must take place within the context of ethical action. Cooperation, acceptance of diversity, crossing of political, cultural, semiotic boundaries - this is what has the greatest potential to facilitate success. We must, as educators, more consciously walk the walk we talk.

## Future Study

This dissertation study opens up several avenues for future research. The Digital Writing program at MU is still evolving; one path for future research would be to engage in ongoing study of the program as it develops. For instance, it would be interesting to examine how well the relationships developed by the members of the DWC held up over

the long term, particularly in light of the current national economic crisis and the effect it might have upon institutional funding and resources. As well, another avenue would be to follow student demand for the program. Though the members of the DWC do not at present plan to make Digital Writing the only freshman composition course available, expanding student demand may well determine the ultimate outcome. Additionally, it would be informative to explore whether or not the multimodal composing skills learned in Digital Writing courses transferred to other courses throughout the institution. Will the student facility with multiple modalities encourage instructors in other courses to structure their courses in such a way as to capitalize upon this skill set? Does multimodal composition, in fact, facilitate the development of multimodal composing in other disciplines?

Though there is much fodder for future study within the confines of MU, other possibilities for future research also include comparing the experiences and outcomes of the faculty and students at MU to other programs implementing multimodal composition. Does the fully multimodal composition course approach facilitate institutionalization of multimodal composing practice better than the model in which single multimodal assignments are integrated into a traditional composition curriculum? Do students in multimodal courses perform better than those in traditional composition courses, as they have been determined to have done at MU? Will other institutions, perhaps following MU's lead, encounter the same success?

Multimodal composing practices and attempts to integrate these practices into composition curricula will, no doubt, continue to challenge members of the field. As

such, the present study serves only as a jumping off point. Ongoing study promises to both answer and pose additional questions.

## In Closing

There is much to take from Miami University's success in building institutional consensus in support of the Digital Writing Collaborative and digital writing courses. Let me review what I consider from this study to be the most significant factors we might take and apply to our own endeavors. First and foremost, walk the walk. Engage in the curricular innovation in a way that supports that which you wish to institutionalize. Secondly and perhaps no less importantly, embrace assessment. Do it immediately; do it often. Continue doing it even after you've won over your supporters. The assessment process engenders trust, provides direction, and offers a much needed cross-check for innovators. It can be difficult and time consuming, but it is truly central to building institutional relationships. Know your stuff. Be prepared and have done your homework. Have a champion, but don't expect them do make it happen alone, and certainly don't expect them to carry it on alone.

Key to building institutional relationships is respect for divergent ideologies, pedagogies, and practices. Threats do not convert for the long term, and carrots help, but proof and right action offer the best path to success. Change happens only within communities. Remember that though we work within institutions, we work with people. Support those who buy-in from the start by giving them what they need to stay in, whether that be data or tech support or release time. Invite. Make friends and allies. Do so with patience and tolerance for those who do not see the value of what you do. Work

using assessment, right action and relationship to convince non-believers of your worth. Do this from the start by validating their worth.

The Digital Writing Collaborative and faculty and administration at Miami University were successful in all of these aspects. As a result they have instituted a significantly innovative multimodal first-year composition curriculum. Their work serves as a model to those faculties, programs, and institutions wishing to cross over to the multimodal side themselves. Additionally, this work serves as a model for others wishing to attempt curricular innovation or other actions demanding the development of institutional consensus. As technologies expand and the role of the university in contemporary society continues to evolve, the need for classroom innovative will grow, and implementation of new curricula will certainly rely upon the alignment of institutional ideologies. Miami University's digital writing curriculum and their process of developing institutional consensus offer us a framework from which we might approach the curricular challenges of the future.

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