COMPUTERS, COMPOSITION AND CONTEXT: NARRATIVES OF PEDAGOGY AND TECHNOLOGY OUTSIDE THE COMPUTERS AND WRITING COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the technology and pedagogy histories of composition teachers outside of the computers and writing community in order to provide context and future avenues of research in addressing the instructional technology needs of those teachers. The computers and composition community has provided many opportunities for writing teachers to improve their understanding of new technologies. However, for those teachers who lack the resources, positions, and backgrounds often enjoyed by the computers and composition community, there is little that can be provided to more equitably address their teaching needs. Although there is much innovative work in the computers and composition community, more needs to be done to address the disconnect between theory and practice often perceived by the marginalized majority of composition teachers. Although the community has often cast itself as sensitive to the majority of composition teachers, they have also implicitly ignored these teachers because the community has addressed technology in highly focused terms, relied on contexts for its scholarship that do not reach many composition teachers, and has been dismissive of many mainstream technologies. In order to address the gaps left by these assumptions, this dissertation shares literacy, teaching, and technology narratives of five writing teachers from different generations, educational backgrounds, and regions, situating their histories against the backdrop of composition and computers and writing history. These narratives revealed that contemporary theory did not appear relevant to the teaching of writing for those teachers who were not educated in the field of
composition. They also revealed that the teaching of writing and the use of technology was remarkably uniform across many contexts, even as the specific technologies employed were different based mostly on an individual’s own educational history. Specific recommendations for the computers and writing community to address the needs of this group of composition teachers were to model technology use in first year composition and beyond, work with individual teachers to adapt technology to meet their needs, consider other disciplines uses of technology and writing, and continue to pay attention to educational histories of those who teach composition to see how technologies are adapted.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I first came to my advisor, Dr. Kristine Blair, with the original idea about this dissertation, she was enthusiastic. I had no idea how this dissertation would turn out, and at times, I was not sure if it would turn out at all, but I always came back to Dr. Blair’s enthusiasm, confident that if she felt it was a worthy project, than it must be. When all was said and done, Dr. Blair’s quibbles and sedulous assistance in working on this document not only helped me finish, but added to the respect that I already had for her work in composition and computers and writing.

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I owe my deepest gratitude to my family who has taught me the value of hard work, a respect for difference, and a deep appreciation for education. And finally, warm love and appreciation to my wife, who diligently wrestled with her own dissertation at the same time, whose emotional support and patience with my work schedule was so important to finishing this document.
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CHAPTER ONE

TECHNOLOGIES, CONTEXTS AND COMMUNITIES IN COMPOSITION

Introduction

In *Computers and Writing: The Cyborg Era*, James Inman provides a forum for those in the computers and writing community to share their cyborg histories. He frames the community histories by arguing that contextually complex issues such as technology developments, resistance to technology, and the impact of marginalized social groups have all contributed in unique ways to the history of technology use in the writing classroom even as these issues are often ignored in other histories of this community. Yet another group often ignored in histories of technology use in the composition classroom are those writing teachers who use technologies in their pedagogy, but who do not consider themselves a part of the communities that espouse those technologies. Currently, those writing teachers who are often ignored are those who use or are used by computer technologies yet do not consider themselves technology specialists.

For Inman, in writing a history of computers and composition, “a best-case scenario will occur when many histories are being crafted and considered” (61). He furthers this goal by substantiating his history of computers in composition with cyborg era narratives, each of which considers multiple literacies, pedagogies, and critical responsibilities vis-à-vis current teachers and scholars in the computers and writing community responding to a series of questions. These narratives describe how each scholar/teacher became active in the community, the most important lesson each learned from the community, what worries each about the community, and the project that influenced each the most.
Most responses to Inman’s questions are similar. The majority reveal that they became a part of the computers and composition community because they met somebody who was already in the community. The responses to the question about the most important work of the community gravitate around the unified and energetic nature of the community - Geoffrey Sirc calling it “the staggering energy children have at play” (Inman 233). One of the few community voices that actively resists the unified response is Cynthia Selfe, writing instead that the most important work the community does is to “be creative and politically active in their own uses of technology” and inform others (Inman 202). Selfe is critiquing uses of technology that (re)inscribe privileged and dominant cultural values; thus, she is asking the children to take the work they do seriously. This leads to Inman asking the question about what the members worry about the most within the community. It is the most intriguing question both in the variety of responses it elicits and in the important issues it raises. The community responses to the other three questions cast a picture of a fairly unified family. The question about their worries, however, asks the members to find bugs in the code. For Inman, as evident from his earlier call, what worries him are the voices that are left out of its history, both current and past. For Selfe, the worry comes in the guise that we are not paying enough attention, that technologies need a humanist interface, and that we need to work to inform others.

As a member of the community of computers and composition, what worries me is a synthesis of the doubts expressed by Selfe and Inman – that we do not pay enough attention to those voices who do not belong to the computers and composition community, yet use or are used by the technologies of the classroom. Therefore, in this dissertation, I add to the cyborg era chronicle by collecting histories of teachers who
have not participated or published actively in the computers and writing community, but who use some form of technology, broadly defined, in their classrooms. I do so through a series of narratives from a limited number of university and college writing instructors, looking primarily at their own educational backgrounds, what pedagogies and educational experiences have shaped them the most, and consequently, what technologies they have had experience with and have considered as important to their writing pedagogy. I also outline some ways that the computers and composition community can respond in theory and practice to these sometimes marginalized teachers of writing who often lack the resources, background, and interest in how newer technologies impact the writing classroom.

This chapter outlines the background and motivation of the current study. Beginning with Inman’s criteria for cyborg era histories, it expands the definitions of technology, problematizes a definition of context, and critiques the current, albeit implicit research agenda of the computers and writing community. This chapter can not address every facet of this complex issue. However, in order to situate the cyborg era narratives of the communities of writing teachers outside the scope of those in computers and composition, this chapter addresses certain assumptions about technology, context, and research so as to provide a basis for analysis.

The Cyborg Era

In drafting a definition of the cyborg era, Inman outlines three important elements of telling these histories: First, “individuals should be foregrounded along with computers and other technologies” (14). He asks us to remember that people are more than users; the corollary is that computers do not use people. The second element is that technologies are equitably given the same emphasis as the “individuals and
contexts around them” (15). Imaginings of Arthur C. Clarke and Douglas Adams aside, there is no such thing as “The Computer” - technologies are usually adapted through situational and individual agency rather than adopted, and recognizing the roles of computer technologies in this adaptable position, especially in the classroom, creates a richer means of describing their history. Finally, Inman’s third position on a cyborg history is that contexts matter (15). It is difficult to imagine an argument about computer technologies without imagining the contexts. After all, the day-to-day operations at Microsoft promote a far different history than the day-to-day operations of the average state university. Inman borrows part of his “cyborg” definition from Donna Haraway whose 1985 postmodern argument that the breakdown of traditional binaries with the blending of animal/human, human/machine, and immaterial/material leaves people never fully human or machine, but cyborg -- products of and participants in the informatics of domination (Haraway 161). Though a revision of Haraway’s reading of the relationship between humans and technology, Inman’s synergistic tripartite definition of the cyborg creates useful though multiple lenses by which to read the histories of not only computer technologies but the adaptation of all technologies in the composition classroom. However, for the purposes of the current study, I want to propose framing the scholarship and practice of the community of computers and writing with three warrants:

1. All teaching supplements are technological in nature, if we define technology as material and rhetorical artifacts that embody a system or method of knowledge making. As such, any supplement is material, adaptable and innovative when put to use.
2. Social and political contexts often privilege some technologies to the detriment of other technologies. Such contexts also lead to the foregrounding, ubiquity and deletion of certain technologies in the histories and practices of individuals.

3. Despite ideals to the contrary, scholarly communities often sequester their works and days to within their own community, existing as what Richard Rorty might argue is a “quasi-priestly order” (35).

This chapter deals with each of these warrants separately, proposing that these warrants can reveal some problematic trends within the scholarship about computer technologies in the classroom, especially when placed parallel to the experiences of the non-computers-and-writing-specialists who often lack the conditions and resources enjoyed by many in the computers and composition community. The central argument revealed in these warrants is that the computers and writing community, despite existing as a theoretically grounded and energetic group of scholars and teachers, can often exclude or ignore the technology needs and uses by those outside their community. In the following pages, I discuss how these warrants can better help us understand this exclusion. In so doing, I also create a place to learn about technology use from those outside the computers and writing community. Using Inman’s cyborg era definition, which emphasizes the interplay of individuals, technologies and contexts, the approach of the current study is to ask writing instructors not associated with the computers and writing community their impetus for pedagogy, how they use technology, and what attitudes they have toward technology in the classroom. I examine how informants’ literacy, technology and education narratives can both inform and critique current assumptions that computers and writing specialists may have.
Warrant 1: Technology as Immaterial/Material

The first common perspective in much of the composition and computers research is that technology is only that which is both innovative and material.¹ I would like to offer the perspective in the current study that all teaching supplements be considered technology – technology defined here as material and rhetorical artifacts that embody a system or method of knowledge making and communication. Although work in defining technology is done in other communities, much of the scholarship in the computers and composition community focuses on technology as only the material means to efficient instruction with tool or medium (Haas 44). Comprehensive studies have argued that a pattern develops when material technologies enter the classroom at the K-12 level. Larry Cuban’s *Teachers and Machines*, argues that, in fact, technologies cycle through an early adoption stage, followed by promotion, policy formation, but, eventually, only limited use. This limited use, Cuban argues, is a result of the material side – mechanical failures and logistics – but also of the immaterial side – that most new technologies maintain existing practices despite their promises to the contrary. However, when the material technologies do make significant changes, it could be reasoned that the immaterial technologies will change as well and vice versa. Furthermore, when material technologies work in different contexts, as in the case of the personal computer in which its introduction into schools reinforced its introduction into the home, we see such technology become ubiquitous in one way or another, suggesting an additional stage to Cuban’s technology cycle.

¹ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address completely this complex argument. Neil Postman’s chapter “Invisible Technologies” in *Technopoly* deals with the topic of immaterial technology and ideology at some length by looking at how beliefs are embedded in polling, grading and IQ testing, and argues that language, “as pure ideology” (123), is the most totalizing of all invisible technologies. For the current argument, I remain focused on issues relevant to education in the university and composition in particular.
Technology, in this broader sense of the material and the epistemic opens up a greater means of reading how university writing teachers use technologies in their classroom not only in how patterns develop in technology evolution (Selfe Technology and Literacy 151; Cuban Teachers and Machines 88), but also in the ways the technology of instruction, a literacy if you will, follows the similar pattern of promise, implementation, and critique. However, it would be difficult to account for all the supplements university writing teachers have utilized. Furthermore, all technologies are situated in a milieu, which is to say that certain past technologies did not exist in the social, cognitive and material manifestation that they exist now. More will be said on the topic in warrant two, but it should be noted that the current milieu recognizes technology as computer technologies and its related constituents (e.g. Internet, CD-ROM, software, PDA, etc.)

Thus, for the current study, one focus on technology will be in looking at how those who consider themselves non-specialists with computer technologies read these computer technologies as supportive, subversive, or supplemenal to their own pedagogy. In other words, how the current trend in higher education to use computer technologies intersects with their experience with other technologies. This intersect becomes important in establishing an ethos for the informants of the study, but also in further supporting perceptions that technologies that are ubiquitous are not in fact considered innovative, and thus lose economic and rhetorical support. As Selfe and others have demonstrated, Americans have a firm belief that “technology + education = progress” (Technology and Literacy 119). By not being technology-users, or by my definition, innovative by the standards of the current milieu, then teachers are considered not to be furthering progress. I contend that teaching narratives by non-
technology specialists might reveal ways that educational traditions and conditions within one milieu can impact future teachers’ perceptions of technology. All teachers can be seen as innovative in how they consider technology when placed against the backdrop of these past educational experiences. Consequently, these cyborg era narratives might reveal how writing teachers may or may not be able to see what uses past technologies may still hold for the current and future milieu based on the features of a particular material or immaterial technology. I analyze the intersect between history and technology using a framework based on a technology’s potential as presentative, distributive, interactive, communicative, or creative. A full description of these features is discussed in Chapter Two. The focus of this first warrant is to establish how technology is both material and immaterial, innovative and adaptable no matter what features it holds; thus, these specific differences will not be considered just yet.

Truth be told, most in and outside the university define technology as primarily that which is both innovative and material. Most probably consider the computer as technology but not the pencil or even writing because the later two seem not to be innovative. This notion is reinforced by the technology sections of most every newspaper and magazine, which deal primarily with computer and Internet technologies. Furthermore, a brief survey of earlier articles written for the computers and composition community reveals a similar sense of technology. The prevailing question in technology and writing research seems to be, “How does innovation affect students?” In some ways, this is a question about tradition. However, it is important to remember that technology is not innovative in and of itself. As part of my warrant, I submit that it is the potential of adaptability that makes technology innovative. To this end, Denis Baron, in “From Pencils to Pixels,” reminds us of this adaptable potential
when he argues that technologies such as the pencil, writing, and the computer, though innovatively adapted for other uses, were originally designed with other primary purposes. As personal computers become more standardized, their adaptability factor will be decreased, much like that of a pencil or even an ATM, so that they seem less innovative and therefore less technological. The process of standardization makes innovation ubiquitous (Eisenstein 11), and standardization comes only after extended use within a culture.

Adaptability aside, technology is also often considered primarily as material. However, materials are not often that adaptable in and of themselves. Thus, Baron further defines technology as “a way of engineering materials in order to accomplish an end” (16). Note that it is not the material itself but the way in which materials are adapted toward an end. This is a difficult but important point to make about technology when so much of what we call technology is material. Incidentally, Baron, writing in a computers and compositionist forum does fall victim to this assumption despite his definition when he wonders about the future and how “technology affects literacy” (32). Literacy is itself a technology – It is a system of meaning-making that impacts the material as much as it is impacted by the material. This assumption that technology is only the material also reveals the need to reassess how computers and compositionists define technology and how this community can learn how technologies are used from those outside the community.

Although technology can be innovative and material, it is also that which is adaptable and systematic. For the purposes of the current study, as well as technology use in general, a useful definition of technology should account for this broader view. Noted management professor Peter F. Drucker defines technology as more than just the
material: “we might define technology as human action on physical objects or as a set of physical objects characterized by serving human purposes” (Drucker 30). Furthermore, Drucker argues that “Technology...must be considered as a system, that is, a collection of interrelated and intercommunicating units and activities” (36). He writes that technology is both a way (i.e. action) and a material means of production – both object and system, each working together to organize and facilitate human work. It is with this definition - technology as material *and* system - that Inman’s second criterion of a cyborg history comes into play: technology is adapted rather than adopted. If technology was merely a material artifact, then its adaptability factor would be very minor (as would its potential to be innovative).

It should be clarified how learning and work correspond to one another. As Drucker is writing from a perspective outside the field of writing instruction, his view on the units and activities might not perfectly correspond with those in the field. In fact, writing, just like all acts of literacy, can be recast as an action. In the field of computers and writing, hypertext theorist and author Michael Joyce offers one useful lens by which to read literacy and learning as forms of action when he writes:

> we are only able to communicate the experience of a way to learn. We cannot communicate what was learned itself nor the present-tense moment of learning. The fact is that we often do not know and surely have no certain ways to measure or to judge either the outcomes of learning or its moment. Nor can we look to technology to accomplish what we cannot in this instance...we are left with what we can pass on: a way of doing things, history embodied in technology. (123)
Under such constraints, it is easy to recognize the similar argument - that people learn the way (i.e. the system) not the it (i.e. the material). Joyce, Baron and Drucker seem to iterate that technology does not exist as something fixed. Instead, technology helps us adapt material and system to the way we act, learn and work.

One way of revealing the connections between the systems and materials in composition is through examining relationships between material artifacts and various systems of organization, thinking, and working. For the current study, such an examination provides further benefits. For one, as argued earlier, although specific technologies exist within their own milieu, technological evolution follows similar patterns (Cuban; Selfe). Under the warrant that all supplements and pedagogies are technological, certain patterns and intersections become more apparent when looking at instructional shifts within the discipline of composition. These shifts are even more important to studying the educational and literacy narratives of those who teach writing when we consider that so many such teachers lack a specific degree or background in the profession outside of taking a writing class or two as an undergraduate. The way that immaterial technologies like pedagogy are enacted also follows the way that material technologies like the computer are enacted. Thus, those without specific training in the teaching of writing might be more susceptible to limited use or be more comfortable with traditional use because they may lack specific theoretical understanding of the ebb and flow of pedagogy in the discipline. As the most popular material and thus epistemic technology of the current writing classroom is the textbook, the ebb and flow creates a dilemma for writing teachers. Robert Connors has argued that the increasingly more qualified field of composition has improved the quality and application of its textbooks (110). However, as a number of writing teachers still lack these qualifications, and as a
number of textbooks change very little from edition to edition, we might also understand that “most textbooks, especially when used by inexperienced teachers, reinforce socially coercive constraints” (Bleich “In case of Fire” 19). Although arguable, the more qualified in the profession of composition are less susceptible to such constraints, just as those who are fully literate with any technology are less determined by that technology.

Thus, the current study can benefit from a brief assessment of two notable adaptations of material supplement for learning - textbooks and computers. The nineteenth century composition textbook is credited with transforming pedagogy from teacher-centered lecture based on treatises into a reader-centered series of exercises. Many have attempted to assess this shift. Some have argued that a shortage of trained teachers in America created a need for printed instruction (Connors 70) or that changes in the larger social goals and institutions required a different mode of teaching (Berlin Writing Instruction 58) or even that advances in the sciences led to more informed means of study (Kitzhaber 78-79). However, these arguments seem to argue discrete reasons for the shift rather than evolutionary changes in technology, broadly defined.

Take for example the practice of including pictures in early grammars and other composition related textbooks. Lucille Schultz describes how these illustrations were a response to early seventeenth century education theory that argued that “objects of everyday life could be represented as a means of understanding” (87). The technology then involved engraved woodcuts that were imprinted on the book. Three hundred years later, contemporary composition textbooks (e.g. Seeing and Writing 2, Composition of Everyday Life, etc.) have renamed the illustrations of everyday life “visual rhetoric,” though the technology used to produce such pictures has evolved to
digital or offset page imprints. However, the pedagogy remains the same -- students responding to the images. Despite the inroads of contemporary composition theory and the changes in how we teach writing and the production of texts, as Steve Westbrook argues, “the vast majority of textbook prompts promote the kind of mark-making that reinscribes students’ identities as consumers” (464). If discrete, revolutionary transformations of supplement and textbook had occurred, then today we would not see much of the vestiges of the nineteenth century textbook, which, Sharon Crowley argues, still permeate current teaching technologies (Crowley 211-212).

In charting a brief textbook history, we can see how systems and materials work together. In a 1993 article, “Mirroring Ourselves? The Pedagogy of Early Grammar Texts,” Gregory Glau argues that early, rule-centered grammar texts were based on a “perception of students as deficient” (418). Although Glau’s argument is supported by a milieu of “associationism” (424) and faculty psychology (Kitzhaber 3), the technology of print and the developments in literacy education were also changing as a result of cultural and social challenges which in turn effected psychological changes (Berlin Rhetorics 32-33; Harris 13; Ong 82; Eisenstein 12). As texts increasingly began not to rely on somebody else, an interpreter, a literate, an educator, to read them, the textbooks began to be written to the reader or student. These textbooks were transformed from guides to instructions - lists and exercises, models and modes - as a result of the emerging features of nineteenth century print technologies. It was during the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century that the textbook transformed from a treatise or “recorded” lecture into a pedagogical apparatus in its own right (Connors; Glau; Berlin Writing Instruction; Wright and Halloran). Furthermore, composition textbooks, like all technologies of instruction, have embedded within them multiple
layers of technology. To adapt a textbook to a classroom means adapting a vestige of
these underlying technologies as well.

The evolution of the nineteenth century writing textbook in many ways mirrors
the history of computer technologies used in the writing classroom. Early computer
technologies were developed to distribute and process discrete processes, and as a result
their early uses were in providing answers or treatises if you will. Later adaptation of
the technology led to more user-adapted and reader-centered practice, much like that of
the textbook. As detailed in Gail Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia
Selke's *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-
1994: A History*, the transformation from Computer Aided Instruction (CAI) to
Computer Mediated Instruction (CMC) brought significant changes to the classroom. At
first, the computer was used as "teacher" of sorts, in which pre-determined answers
were to be fed back into the computer - the consumption of computing technology or
computer as an aide. In such instances, the technology, be it computer or textbook,
requires an interpreter to fashion the information for the user. However, later
developments in computer and social systems led to the computer as a means for the
average user to produce and facilitate communication. This transformation mirrors
many changes in composition’s pedagogical and disciplinary history (Faigley

The overall effect demonstrated within these two transformations - from treatise
to textbook, from CAI to CMC - is that technology is not fixed, but is in fact a material
and system adapted to/by/for other materials and systems. In the current landscape of
the computers and composition community, however, the prevailing system is one that
asks people who use computers to actively critique these systems. For some in the

community, it is not so much using computer technologies as much as it is critical use -
in a sense, complicating a literacy with another literacy. Not to put too fine a point on in
it, the disciplinary identity of computers and composition is associated with this call for
critical literacy. Cynthia Selfe’s warnings that teachers should “Pay Attention,”
(Technology and Literacy) or Selfe and Selfe’s call that we should educate students “to
be technology critics as well as technology users” (484) demonstrate this disciplinary
prerequisite of computers and composition work. Additionally, Eldred and Toner write,
“For writing teachers integrating technology, it becomes crucial to determine how the
software drives a particular way of thinking and whether or not the engine can be
diverted from the programmed path and encouraged to take alternative mental routes”
(39). A motivated and able user can adapt most software into the ideal, theorized
technology, but more often than not, the technology is adapted to suit the user’s own
system of pedagogy.

However, motivation and ability do not necessarily inhabit the same person.
Although I certainly agree that dominant software can reinforce dominant practices, as
each perpetuates the other, I also believe that pragmatic adaptation of common
technologies does not necessarily demonstrate non-critical use. It is here my warrant
comes to bear. If a writing teacher is using a computer without critically reflecting on
the technologies that make it up, is he or she really a poor teacher with technology? Has
the computers and composition community considered pedagogies (system as
technology) that use closed-computing or fixed interfaces in innovative ways? Although
dominant technology can reinforce sometimes harmful dominant practices, is it always
the case when such technologies enter the classroom? These are the many questions we
are left with when thinking of technology as only innovative and material. But as seen in
the way systems as technology intersect and influence material technology, and vice versa, the answer to these questions cannot be definitive.

Technology is adapted for purposes that in turn create new technologies. The movement from the eighteenth century rhetoric treatise to the nineteenth century composition textbook was a result of a system—a technology in its own right—adapted for another system. The evolution of closed computing to open computing follows a similar pattern. Yet, despite the adaptability of technology to serve a system and thus create a new system, there is still a sense by some in the computers and writing community that technology itself is only adopted, and therefore, the definition of technology as only material seems to fit. My current study will seek to address this apparent lack of adaptation by those not in the community through analysis of case studies as to why technologies are or are not used and how they are adapted. I hypothesize that it is not computer illiteracy that prevents critical adaptation of computer technologies by some writing instructors but a familiarity and comfort with what is perceived to be a material artifact made more malleable to a user’s prevailing system of meaning making or pedagogy. Thus, to clarify this historical comparison in the analysis of each of my informants, I will look at how technologies are used as presentative, distributive, interactive, communicative, or creative. I expect to see innovation only where traditional technologies or forms of technologies do not interfere with a new use for the technology.

Warrant 2: Context Matters

In *Rhetorical Ethics and Internetworked Writing*, James Porter furthers the notion that the immaterial is also technology while also establishing the importance of context to its relationship with people and other technologies. Porter writes:
rhetoric is a technology—and there is no neutral technology because all technologies are always already invested with a category bias; they are always socially and culturally situated... constructed out of specific historical circumstances, and reflecting the biases of the context. (67)

Although many in computers and composition have argued that writing instructors who use technology should become aware of how the innovative and material technologies influence the classroom and teaching (see Boiarsky; Haas and Neuwirth; Kaplan), few in the computers and composition community seem to recognize a broader definition of technology and its effect on the classroom. Thus, my second assumption for the current study of technology use by university writing instructors is that social and political contexts often privilege some technologies to the detriment of other technologies. Such contexts also lead to the foregrounding, ubiquity and deletion of certain technologies. The influence of these contexts often is historical and idiosyncratic, and thus use and non-use of various technologies is largely influenced by an individual writing teacher’s history with and preference for certain technologies.

In education, ideological and historical forces work together to form contexts which in turn influence future ideology and practice. These forces often create an embedded ideology. The current landscape of education is one based on the theory that ways of knowing, informed by practice and immediate experience is a better means of teaching than memorization and a focus on “what” is taught. Selfe writes in Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century, “public education in America is generally envisioned as a progressive system that, systematically informed by scientific principles of teaching and learning, prepares individuals to take their place in a democratic society as productive and literate citizen” (120). This is a significant technological change, even
as past practices and ideologies still underpin some of these changes. A brief survey of writing instruction in the American university reflects this evolutionary change (see Berlin *Rhetoric and Reality*; Connors; Brereton). Simply put, the transition from an older, richer field of rhetoric in which literacy was a means of discovery evolved into the training of fixed knowledge with a focus on the efficiency of teaching (Brereton 10). Here is where the context of the dichotomy is revealed. Despite critiques to the contrary and although our intent in composition is to fulfill our view of public education as progressive, efficiency of teaching is still given preference as revealed by composition textbooks in which: the audience is a teacher rather than a student (Moffet 209-10), and the purpose is “sustaining an infrastructure of beliefs” (Miller *Textual Carnivals* 158) and ideologies (Welch 269). Such progressivism could connect with the previous warrant inasmuch as textbooks are a primary technology of writing instruction because they are portable, individualistic, and maintain the ideology of developing skills for the lone writer. However, it is more likely the case that the textbook becomes the most efficient means of teaching because of its long history within the contexts of education as a generalist primer, thus embedding it and its ideology on generation after generation of student. The efficiency argument is particularly keen when we consider that, as Marc Bousquet has argued, “Under the actually existing system of academic work, the university clearly does not prefer the best or most experienced teachers, it prefers the cheapest teachers” (222). Cheap, efficient, and under-prepared teachers of composition supported by such low-commitments may not always fully realize the complex influences of the contexts in which they teach, and thus may not exert the type of informed agency toward their pedagogy and other technology uses that they are expected to.
One example of the role of this complex intersection of individual agency and context can be revealed in the progressive education ideal expressed by Seymour Papert as constructionism. An early pioneer in the use of computers for education, and an educational theorist heavily influential to the computers and writing community, Papert argues that education is best enacted when students are engaged in constructing or building, thus supporting progressive education. In “Computer as Material: Messing About with Time,” Papert describes a project in which a junior high school science class was tasked with using various materials, including the computer, to create a timer. Such a constructionist-friendly context, though, demonstrates an important point when looking at the influence of context on technology use in education and literacy practices. Papert’s examination revealed that although the students making the computer-timers created more adaptable clocks, the overall project revealed that “none of the clock media (computers, sand, wood, etc.) stood out for the students as more desirable or valuable than the others.” Given variety and freedom, the participants selected what they were comfortable with. Papert later adapted Piaget’s concept of egocentrism to the idea of technocentrism, in which research on computers and educational practice tend to focus on the immediate material technology, just as students and teachers, given the option, construct a context that best serves their comfort level. For Papert, what becomes important in technology use is the critical examination of the cultures in which the technology operates because the preferences that students and teachers enact in the classroom are not just immediately contextual but situated, that is to say, framed by not only the available resources in a given situation, but by a constructed narrative of practice and experience. In other words, the technology we rely on is the technology
that we have learned with in past contexts, even as we seem to have control over what we elect to introduce to the classroom as teachers.

Turning to the computers and composition community, to be sure, context has been an important matter for its research. The community seems highly aware of the importance of studying social and political contexts, focusing much of their work on issues of both physical and intellectual access, gender (Selke “Technology in the English Classroom”; Blair and Takayoshi) and race (Redd; Knadler), as well as global issues such as the environment (Yagelski). However, much of this research is focused on the contexts of learning rather than the contexts of teaching. In other words, this research assesses the generalizable relationship between computer technologies and the contexts of student identity and literacy rather than any generalizable effect that contexts have on teaching and teachers. The assumption about teaching can ignore not only the immediate contexts of teachers, though there is a commitment to address access first, but also the complex individual experiences of teachers who were neither trained nor grew up with the type of technologies that those in the computers and composition community enjoyed.

The crux of my second warrant, and thus a concern of my current study, is that individual agency informed by past practice is a driving factor in technology use in the composition classroom. Even when limited by institutional traditions or physical spaces, innovative and adaptable uses of technology can and do take place; however, these uses are based on the comfort and familiarity that each instructor has with the technology. As I previously argued, technology is both material and system, but it resides in local and historical contexts. How do we read, then, these contexts for writing teachers in a way that informs their use of technologies? One way is to uncover the factors that have
led certain teachers to select the technologies that they do. Another way is to look at assumptions about new teachers and their willingness to defy traditions of education. Part of my study’s approach attempts to account for both the active selection of teaching materials and the assumptions made about teachers and technologies by asking teachers about their individual contexts.

I argue for this warrant not because I believe computers and writing specialists do not know this, but because I do not believe it is reflected in their history. The histories told by Hawisher et al. and Inman sometimes reveal defiance against a local institution’s historical contexts. This defiant attitude reveals a problem, particularly for those either new to teaching or in contexts without the technological contexts that might allow such defiance. Hawisher et al. reflect in the final pages of their history that “People often see new technologies through the lens of their own hopes and dreams” (285). Because technology is a messy intersect of material and system, it comes embedded with ideologies that might conflict with some teachers’ hopes and dreams. Nancy Kaplan puts it this way:

as the material instantiations of discursive practices, tools and technologies necessarily embody ideologies and ideological conflict. Tools or technologies enable, but also disable: they expand conceptions of what exists and what is possible, but also contract the field of potentialities. Tools or technologies validate some practices as natural and right, but proscribe others as deviant, impractical, or simply unthinkable (Kaplan 14).

For those who are new to teaching and see themselves as preserving certain goals of higher education, possibly inspired by a traditional teacher, defiance might not be their
desire – they in fact might not have the freedom to challenge approved technologies or technologies that they may be comfortable with (Duffelmeyer 298).

As demonstrated by Duffelmeyer, a problematic assumption related to individual agency and contexts is in thinking newer teachers are sometimes considered “closer” to more innovative technologies whereas older teachers are considered more traditional. There are a few problems with this assumption. First of all, each university has its own local history. Sharon Crowley argues that:

institutional practices in composition typically represent the general history of the course as well as the history of influential teachers and administrators on a given campus. Current-traditional rhetoric lingers on in composition textbooks, not because it is of much use to writers, but because the academy is comfortable with it. (220)

A university that hires innovative teachers and invests in innovative technologies will have a different history than a university that does neither. Thus, it is important to recognize the institutional contexts and what they assume of teachers when studying technology use.

Second, studies have demonstrated the problems with assuming new teachers use technology more. Carpenter and Tait, in a study conducted across multiple disciplines at Queensland University in Australia write that “the more traditional lecturers are more likely to use technology than those who practise more progressive and dialogic teaching methods” (210). However, they also found, “technology is most frequently used in ways that require no active learning” or “appears simply to be an end in itself” (Carpenter and Tait 201). As previously noted, this apparent, non-critical use of technology is of particular interest to the computers and composition community. But further analysis
of more experienced teachers might reveal that, based on the broader definition of technology posited here, innovative teaching can occur when more experienced teachers adapt technology based on how they situate themselves within their individual contexts.

A third problem with these assumptions about teachers concerns the exposure to technologies that more experienced instructors may have. In demonstrating how technologies are both material and system, I touched on some historical contexts and their potential effects on developments in these materials and systems. But what I want to further address here is that some technologies embody contexts in the sense that they capture or contextualize the immediate. In this particular case, it is media as a technology that can manifest experience. Theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book *Remediation* argue that media operates under the twin logics of hypermediacy and immediacy: the use of multimedia or hypermedia to make transparent the medium itself (5). In revisiting these assumptions, we might recognize that a new teacher in some ways has less experience with multiple media and therefore less a corpus from which to draw. In this way, history is a richer stimulus to technology use in the classroom as the more experienced teacher has had more exposure to different technologies.

However, despite the apparent errors in assuming new teachers are more versed in technology use for the classroom, I believe that new teachers are more interested in teaching with new technology but see the risks as great. More experienced teachers, although having the freedom to take more risks in newer technology, are comfortable in a local, individual and historical context that does not require such risks. The theory of such contention is best described by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. For de Certeau, those in a position of established power are in control of the physical
spaces, and as such can employ “strategies” (36) that involve shifting relations within a space, whereas those outside a position of power must employ “tactics” (37), and rely on manipulating time and circumstance to achieve their goals. In the contexts of the current argument, two contrasting groups can be defined. The innovative writing instructor must operate within the contexts of the spaces of power to achieve his or her goal – when these spaces are not conducive to innovation, the instructor becomes the iconoclast, using the tactics of time and circumstance to achieve his or her goal. For example, the early computers and writing specialist, as revealed in the aforementioned histories by Hawisher et al. and Inman, used the current trends in computer technologies to argue for computer classrooms and resources for the writing classroom, often accessing computer labs late at night when the computer scientists were not around. However, as these specialists came to shift the power relationships, often with influence from a larger cultural zeitgeist, the computer specialists were given a place of their own – the computer classroom or lab. Yet, not every classroom is a computer classroom, and the traditions of the classroom space are still enacted by those in power. What does that mean for the instructor who has to teach in a space in which he or she doesn’t feel comfortable? What happens to the specialist who must teach within a context where he or she does not feel comfortable? There is not a simple answer here, and the influence or lack of influence of contexts is complex.

If simple declarations of local, individual and historical contexts cannot be applied to a choice to use or ignore newer technologies in the classroom, what does matter? Is it a complex interplay between these contexts, or is it some other variable that drives an instructor to use a certain technology in the classroom? It is questions like these that instigate my study approach. But for these reasons, this study avoids
brand new teachers who may be overly influenced by expectations of tradition, and may lack experience enough to demonstrate some individual agency. Reading individual agency into an informant is tricky business. Thus, for the purposes of this study, a phenomenological approach will be taken. Furthermore, as Inman outlines, both contexts and individuals matter. An approach that uses only the protocol I outline will allow just a glimpse of the complex interplay between these multiple characteristics. Individuals do make informed choices about the technologies they use or do not use in their classrooms, just as they are influenced by a history of teaching and the commitments of their departments to using certain teaching technologies; yet, their perspectives of these contexts can influence how each responds to a given circumstance.

Hawisher et al. conceding that many contexts influence technology use (199), complete their history by writing, “teachers are agents who, as a regular part of their professional and personal lives, make informed decisions about the contexts within which they work and act on those decisions—even within those systems that seem the most overdetermined” (284). The computers and composition community could stand to recognize that such agency is not that easy. For one, the majority of composition classes are taught by untenured, part-time instructors or graduate teaching assistants who lack both the background and the influence to shape their context and pedagogy outside of tradition and common practice. Although some have acknowledged how these contexts can have a negative influence on teaching (Samuels 66), more work needs to be done. Many teachers still have to routinely vie for computer lab space, library resources, webspace, and publication space. Although contexts can often be transformed in positive ways through individual agency, such transformations often require a significant amount of either defiance or acquiescence.
For the current study, the interviews will reveal how each informant considers the influence of historical, individual, social and environmental contexts. These contexts have been categorized in the analysis section of Chapter Two for the purposes of this study, but suffice it to say that the interplay between these contexts complicates any argument that context alone determines teaching practice.

Warrant 3: Defining Specialty

The final warrant important in my analysis is that scholarly communities often sequester their works and days to within their own community, existing as what Richard Rorty might argue is a “quasi-priestly order” (35). Both the composition community and the computers and composition community are not immune from this. Inman critiques the Hawisher et al. history because the latter define computers and composition as a subfield. For Inman, computers and writing is a community – one that welcomes all and listens to many. Even as I gladly call myself a member of the computers and composition community, I recognize that communities are not inherently as egalitarian as Inman would like them to be. Communities can exclude and ignore.

According to Hawisher et al., “computers came into the writing classroom, in part, because teachers of writing wanted them there” (284). They do argue for individual agency as a primary means of the introduction of these computers, but as I have argued in the second warrant, this is not a simple case to make. However, I address individual choice here because of the community’s generalization – “teachers of writing.” Note that this is not “some” teachers of writing, or even “teachers who understood the potential for changes in technology,” who wanted the computers in the writing classroom. In fact, computers’ introduction to the writing classroom is primarily
a result of this latter group. Surveying voices within the computers and writing community can reveal not only how such a transformation took place, but also how such a move came to ignore the work that certain writing teachers do.

Sibylle Gruber in her article, “The good, the bad, the complex: Computers and Composition in transition” charts her own history of the computers and writing community by using a distinction first raised by Albert Borgmann in Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life to examine the timeline of the journal Computers and Composition. In so doing, she attempts “to show the move from techno-enthusiasm and technophobia, to a more pluralistic, postmodern, heteroglot, and cyborgian approach to new information technologies in Computers and Composition” (15). As a revision, I would like to argue that her framework, although working as a linear timeline, can also establish three concurrent types of computers and writing specialist as revealed in Inman’s record of community voices. However, primary to my concerns here, I want to further argue how each of these types can exclude work with computers that writing instructors outside the community do. Furthermore, such a distinction as positive, negative, or complex is one made by what Marc Prensky has labeled digital immigrants (2), and thus it is not as useful in classifying subsequent users of technology.

To be sure, much of what we hear about computers in the writing classroom comes from those in the community of computers and composition. In the field of computers and writing, there are many voices that tell of their experiences, and they can be generally though not completely classified in a few ways. The first type, what Gruber might call “the good,” see computers as innovative and positive, and as such they tend to be the progressive innovators; they are the early adopters and the technology cheerleaders. They wholeheartedly accept new technologies and, furthermore, advocate
the use of these technologies. Although this is a vast generalization, it is still demonstrable to a degree.

In earlier computers and writing work, not necessarily within the composition community, we see the prophets of the machine extolling its digital virtues. Jay David Bolter and Michael Joyce, although, critical to an extent, largely valorize innovation, or as Joyce writes, “the conversion experience” (57) of the computer and its impact on society and literacy. In *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*, writing of the technology-valorization polemic, Selfe further defines the standard-bearing technophile. Her assessment is important here: “the narrative of computers as a progressive literacy tool...expresses most directly American hopes for technology, rather than the realities characterizing technology’s link to literacy in official instructional contexts” (27). In these instances, the hope for the computer is that it will revolutionize the practices of society for the better. We see this element in the computers and writing community when people call for the integration of technology because it is new or innovative rather than through any pedagogical or communicative function. For example, John Barber writes, “the computers and writing community is based on technological change. As new hardware and software technologies become available we seek their incorporation in our endeavors” (Inman 37). Barber continues, now that the ubiquity of computer in school is complete, what “new and creative ways to teach writing” await us (Inman 37)? For Barber, the new, or more precisely, the need to be new is important.

One of the concerns of the community, however is in looking at the computer as “the good.” There is a sense that quick adoption of newer technology brought on by overly positive expectations can reinforce negative practices, and it is here that the
community has the potential to exclude. The participants in Inman’s history often reveal a worry that some teachers are valorizing the computer. For example, Albert Rouzie writes, “If we make a fetish out of the new and cutting edge, and I think we have, we risk losing our real focus on teaching, learning, and literacy” (Inman 199). Raymond Rodrigues adds, if “we continue to concentrate on the bells and whistles, rather than the basic capabilities that the technology offers our students, then we will regress to a marginal group fascinating to ourselves, but to few others” (Inman 196). In either case, the condemnation is directed at an absent we; in a sense, defining what each does not want to happen. We can see this further when Greg Siering notes, “my greatest concern for the computers and writing community is that our need to ‘push the envelope’ and stay on the ‘cutting edge’-in essence, justifying our specialization-may alienate us from the majority of composition” (Inman 232). There seems a perception by each that there are those who are pushing the needs of technology without critical reflection and appropriate inquiry, qualities already revealed in this chapter to be important to the computers and writing community.

Such a “them” and “us” can discourage new teachers and new technologies from inclusion in the community. I recall a particular conference presentation a few years ago in which a writing teacher was discussing the uses of Macromedia’s Flash in his classroom. When it came time to the question and answer portion of the presentation, a prominent member of the computers and writing community was highly critical of the presenter for his failure to critique the technology, as well as his failure to teach his students to be critical of what the community member thought was an overly deterministic and specialized program. Systems and material technologies are introduced with some haste into the composition classroom for the reason that all
semiotic production and consumption practices are constantly changing. I am not advocating that we blindly accept by whim our technological choices, but that we welcome those who have adapted systems and material technologies for their classrooms that exist outside the “common” community practice. The progressives are often the ones committing the primary action of bringing technology into the community. To be sure, some early adopters abandon technologies before they have been thoroughly explored and researched, but they often do so by an introduction of a newer technology that is of pragmatic, social, or intellectual value to the teaching of literate practices.

Gruber’s second category is that of “the bad” - those who are resistant to technologies of society and the classroom. On the topic of technology and literacy practices, we can imagine a number of those who warn us about changes to the technology in our midst: Clifford Stoll’s *Silicon Snake Oil* and Sven Birkerts’ *Gutenberg Elegies*—works that suggest a resistance to current technologies. Additionally, we can image those against technology changes at a local level. We imagine those within our experience who have resisted uses of technology in the classroom or resisted department or university technology adoption. However, for current purposes, I want to return to Inman’s record of the community voices to demonstrate how those opposed to technology can also exclude those outside of the community.

According to Cynthia Jenéy, the computers and writing community should not be driven by computers, but, instead, by their “ancient duty as fearless facilitators of symbolic action mayhem” (Inman 128). For Jenéy, the importance rests in resisting technology, particularly technology companies, and further, “to bulldog the classroom machine to the ground” (Inman 128). What worries her “is the astounding lack of
innovation and radical thinking” (Inman 128). Although she is precisely marking for deletion “repetitions and replications of old methods,” her call is nevertheless that we resist technology that has embedded any repetition or replication. Similarly, Joe Amato raises the concern that we, as a community, are not resisting the “effects of privatization on the more artistic, un-administrative possibilities and configurations new media seemed to augur only a decade ago” (Inman 29). Also echoing a growing number in the community, Jeff Rice argues against the adoption of software productivity tools and their standardizing effect on our teaching, writing and learning (Inman 191). Rice wants the community to resist “the movement to standardize computer-aided writing instruction” and to further “problematize the software in the classroom” (Inman 192). Even Inman himself argues for “those who have been strong advocates of technologies to consider how they might resist the advance of such technologies” (281). For Jenéy, Amato, Rice and others, it is important that we critique the institutional and market forces that privilege technology over writing and one’s role as a teacher.

In these above examples, however, we see resistance in the computers and writing community that is focused on the technology and not the writing. This is an important distinction, and one that requires some unpacking. The progressives may adopt technologies because of their bells and whistles, but the appeal of these bells and whistles is not so easily a singled-mandated action or some dictate by an uber-corporate entity. There are many layers to the appeal of technologies, many of which fall within the pragmatic and practical utility of their introduction into society. Although Jenéy might want the computer to remain a box, Amato the return of an idealized model of the liberal university, and Rice the widespread adoption of open source software, each has a motive that conflicts with current trends to which students and teachers are subject to.
In some ways it is irresponsible to say the computer is just a box to those in computer science or to foist HTML or open source software on those who believe that XML or Microsoft Windows is preferable. Through resisting those technologies outside the favor of those within the community, the computers and composition community can ignore the deployment of technologies that might offer new insights into teaching.

The third type, what Gruber might call “the complex,” are those who recognize both the practical transformative and developmental promise of technologies, and the cultural and political motivations behind these technologies. For Gruber, the complex is the prevailing attitude in computers and writing, and it is most exemplified by the call to be “critical” of computers in composition (see Selfe Technology and Literacy; Hawisher and Selfe “The Rhetorics”). Technology, broadly defined, creates a far more complex and multi-layered forum for critique, and here is where the complex can ignore those outside the community.

Two of the more resolute of this third group of people in computers and writing are Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. In their early work, “The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class” they argue that too often computers are used to reinforce repressive teaching practices; however, at the same time, they fully believe in the promise of these new writing technologies. They write, “we must try to use our awareness of the discrepancies [between the promise and practice of computers in the writing classroom] ...as a basis for constructing a more complete image of how technology can be used positively and negatively” (62). For Hawisher and Selfe, balance is important. Later, in response to Inman’s question in Computers and Writing, Cynthia Selfe argues that “we can no longer fully understand humans as language-using animals if we fail to study the texts that humans are making, reading, and exchanging in
digital-literacy environments, [sic] Nor can we understand humans if we fail to recognize the agency and power that their literacy practices and values exert on, and within, electronic environments” (202). Such an argument raises both the possibility that the computer is more than a box, as Jenéy would say, but less than a conversion experience. Selfe’s 1999 book, *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century* further explores this balance as she critiques the political motivations behind the National Literacy Challenge. The struggle between those who are overly positive toward technology and those who are negative toward technology “misdirects our energies and attentions” from understanding “the complex ways in which technology has become linked with our conception of literacy” (Selfe *Technology* 37).

Upon returning to the community’s voices within Inman’s book, we see many people struggling with this balance. Clancy Ratliff recognizes that the Internet is a place for social activism, even as it excludes voices that should be a part of it (Inman 188). Sibylle Gruber describes her work as an examination of “women’s cyborg lives, the connections between online and offline identities, issues of power and access, as well as online body politics” (Inman 88). And Charles Moran argues that new technologies reveal social inequalities that we could previously not address (Inman 155). In each case, we see the balance of technology and people, computers and communication, in ways that emphasize the importance of context - to seek those without intellectual, social, and cultural access, and to provide through technology a means through which each can become an agent of change.

The balanced, critical role is not without some conflict. For one, balanced use and critique of technology requires constant and consistent attention. As “the numbers of part-time, non-tenure-track positions in writing programs multiply every year, and
the working conditions of persons in these marginalized positions contrast sharply with those of their full-time, tenure-track counterparts” (Gere 124-5), opportunities for these teachers to actively engage with newer technologies can be quite rare. Already under time and work constraints, it is often difficult to “pay attention,” as Selfe argues, when increasingly instructors are given less opportunity and ability to do so. Additionally, writing programs continue to marginalize computers and writing specialists, neither primarily writing teachers nor primarily computer teachers (LeBlanc 16). Writing programs continue to struggle against/with/for funding programs and equitable conditions for faculty at every level (see Miller; Gere). Writing programs continue to construct increasingly more standardized top-down systems to facilitate student assessment (Slevin 293) and teacher training (see Nelson). However, these same concerns exist outside of the composition community – by reading how teachers and departments have integrated material technologies and sound pedagogies, and potentially working together with these communities, more equitable and less exclusionary work could be considered – and above all, a greater understanding of the significance of the many layers of technology that we, as teachers, must negotiate.

The classification of the good, the bad, and the complex creates a third layer to read historical narratives of college and university writing teachers. What is most interesting in this distinction is that it appears more applicable to those who came to the technology within the timeline of the technology’s own development. The defining members of the computers and composition community are of a generation that saw many promises for technology both in and outside the classroom (Oppenheimer 3-6). Existing as a generation before these promises were realized, and after the reality of the technology became apparent has positioned this community in a unique position, just as
later generations, immersed and taking for granted these technologies places them in a unique position. Because these earlier generations saw cultural and educational forums filled with “the rhetorics of technology,” extolling the promise of technology, followed by reality and disappointment in living up to those promises, followed by complex and adapted use, they see their own perspective as following the same positive, negative, and complex continuum. Marc Prensky defines these earlier generations as digital immigrants as they grew up and were educated in their formative years without certain material technologies, namely digital technologies; they immigrated to these technologies later. The application of the distinction between digital immigrants and the later digital natives to my current study is particularly acute because, as Prensky writes, “Digital Immigrant teachers assume that learners are the same as they have always been, and that the same methods that worked for the teachers when they were students will work for their students now” (3). In the same way, even though later generations of teachers assume different roles for technology, and have far more complicated relationships with technology, the assumption could be that they read the technology in these same ways as former generations. Although technologies evolve, bringing with them certain affordances and constraints, and although contexts change, reflecting or resisting these changes, the attitudes of those writing teachers who enter the classroom each day and have lives of their own outside the classroom marks much of what can influence them. The distinction between having a positive, negative, or complex attitude toward technology is often influenced most by one’s age and experience with a given technology. The computers and composition community has existed at some level in parallel to the technologies it espouses in the classroom. A
measure of their attitudes toward technology, as well as those outside the community, can reveal a great deal about how each reads the other.

**Intersection: Concerns and Framework**

The computers and writing community has done a great deal of important and engaging work. Their research agenda has emphasized equitable and critical literacy practices in ways that have encouraged students and teachers alike to (re)consider varied literacy practices. However, in answering Inman’s question as to what worries me, I see four potential problems with the community:

- A community can refuse to fully engage with those outside it.
- A community can focus on newer technology to the detriment of older technologies.
- A community can serve to normalize the innovation and creativity it once sought to encourage.
- A community can isolate itself from those who are unable to listen to it.

This final point creates a means to read histories of teachers who use some technology in the classroom, but are often ignored. As computers and writing specialists, not only should we pay attention to how those outside the community use technology, but also to why they come to use the technology that they do. What worries me about the computers and writing community is that we have insulated ourselves—or maybe we have been insulated—from learning from those outside our immediate community. We need to challenge ourselves with outside ideas and methods. As Rebecca Rickly writes, “if we are to remain a community, one that has moved from the margins to the mainstream, we must be more open to new ideas, new applications, and new re-examinations from those outside of our community” (Inman 194). Although classroom
practice has remained stable for some, the post-postmodern turn in composition has led many to question how some use computer technologies. We cannot afford to ignore methods that might bring important insights on how people compose with/at/against technologies.

My concern — that we are insulated and that we do not pay enough attention to those teaching histories outside of our community — is the main impetus for the current study. Indeed, examining all of the conditions and influences of current writing teachers would be a difficult undertaking. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I have constructed a framework for reading historical change by comparison of evolutionary patterns, conflict and influence of contexts, and the classification of users of technology. Each of these moves helps triangulate a way of reading each of the individual cyborg era narratives that follow. Additionally, it is through this framework that an equal interplay of what Inman has defined as a cyborg era history will also be considered: First, “individuals should be foregrounded along with computers and other technologies” (14); second, technologies are equitably given the same emphasis as the “individuals and contexts around them” (15); third, contexts matter (15).

Conclusion and Study Organization

Chapter One introduces various histories of the computers and writing community written by those in the community. The chapter asks that the members of the community further complicate their reading of technology use and non-use outside of that community. This chapter also outlines a framework for reading cyborg era narratives of teachers outside the community, and addresses the complicated interplay of contexts and agency by using the simple rhetorical strategies of comparison, context, and classification.
Chapter Two addresses the affordances of narrative inquiry in looking at teaching histories. This chapter also outlines an analysis framework based on the interplay between contexts and agency commensurate with cyborg era narratives. Specifically based on informant responses to five question nodes — reflections on literacy, school, and teaching, including attitudes about technology and the future of composition — I introduce an analysis framework based on pedagogical impetus, technology use, and technology attitudes.

Chapter Three and Chapter Four consist of the responses and analysis to the study, with focus given to the interplay of the categories outlined in Chapter Two and how each informant considers his or her use of technology use in the classroom.

Chapter Five completes the study by synthesizing and comparing the informants of the study in light of the analysis framework, describes some limitations and future study concerns, and outlines some ways computers and composition specialists might consider ways to address the topics revealed in the study.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORY AND METHOD

Introduction

The central position in the previous chapter is that the computers and composition community often does not pay enough attention to the educational contexts and individual histories to those teachers who use or are used by the technologies of the writing classroom. The reasons for this position, I argue, are embedded in three warrants: the community’s definitions of technology, the influence or lack of certain contexts in its research agenda, and a tendency to sequester its work. Looking outside the community, this study intends to consider the material, individual and social environments that may influence teacher use or non-use of technology through a collection of narratives with university and college writing instructors, looking primarily at their own educational backgrounds, what pedagogies and educational experiences have shaped them the most, and consequently, what technologies they have had experience with and have considered as important to their writing pedagogy. These narratives are a mode of inquiry that can provide rich and complex descriptions of attitudes and action, and they are best represented by the literacy narratives collected by Deborah Brandt in Literacy in American Lives and the technology literacy narratives in Literate Lives in the Information Age by Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. In this chapter, I argue why such methodology provides a sound means of reading teacher technology use, followed by a complete description of the study procedures. I then

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2 Hawisher and Selfe’s Literate Lives in the Information Age is the published record of a larger project attending to the very argument I address here. In many ways, Hawisher and Selfe are responding to the same concerns that I raise in chapter one, and there is significant overlap. However, the focus of my study on the teacher informants represented here reveals smaller, more definable contextual influences than those addressed by Hawisher and Selfe, at the same time addressing more complicated readings of instructional and literacy technology than just the computer.
outline an analysis framework based on the histories that I use in subsequent chapters as one way to read these histories.

**Methodology: Theory and Background**

The concern as outlined in the previous chapter is that we in the computers and composition community pay more attention to what goes on in our community and the technologies that offer promise within our field than to the immediate experiences and concerns of writing faculty’s use of technology outside of our community. I argue that the neglect is a result of three warrants: that technology is often narrowly defined; that although contexts can limit or encourage certain pedagogies, teachers often are driven more by their own agency; and the computers and composition community like any other specialist community has become less involved with how the non-specialist uses technology. To learn more about these immediate experiences, a research methodology that focuses on the personal experiences and choices from the non-technology specialist writing teacher is required. Although quantitative studies of computers in higher education have shown that almost forty-two percent of classrooms have a computer, with twice that percentage of classrooms having high speed Internet access (Hawkins, Rudy, and Nicolich 31), and further quantitative reports from The Campus Computing Project all construct broad pictures about IT expenditures, administrative support, and use, these methodologies and subsequent findings do not address the immediate experiences of faculty and their choice in how these resources are used. Much could be made of a survey that asked the questions which I cover here, but the purpose of the current study is to gain an emic perspective to the broad research question, “how and why writing teachers use or not use technology in the composition classroom?” By emic perspective, I mean the “participant’s viewpoint” and attitudes (Gall, Gall, and Borg
Though there are competing ways of reading an emic/etic split, I invoke such a distinction here as a reflective research decision. As an invested computers and writing specialist, my own perspective on why and how a teacher uses technology in the classroom is notably marked with much of the research in the computers and writing community. For example, computers and writing research strongly suggests that a writing teacher’s choice not to use computer technology might be due to his or her access to the technology, either physical or intellectual, and/or the lack of support given, either administratively and/or organizationally. This etic perspective shapes how we in computers and composition read technology and its uses by those outside of our community. An emic perspective from a person outside of our community would provide the computers and composition community with further insight in how to better address technology use, and also allow the community a richer perspective from which to reflect on its own assumptions and research.

An approach suited to uncovering the emic perspective is one that would also provide rich and varied responses. In order to understand specific technology-use decisions, a qualitative approach attentive to a few defined features of teaching practice would better address my current focus. For the purposes of the current study, this methodology could best be described as a qualitative narrative study. It is similar to a case study in that theory shapes the questions and interpretation; a framework is later determined as a result of the data of the interviews. It is similar to other forms of narrative inquiry because my only data are the stories that each informant shares, and these data are the perspective that are foregrounded here. But there are some important distinctions that should be noted first.
One of the more important ideas that needs to be foregrounded as I define this emic perspective and the larger case study/narrative approach has to do with the contexts that I have constructed to situate my informants within a larger, admittedly idiosyncratic history of composition. I acknowledge that the history and analysis I weave is not meant to be complete, nor is it meant to account for the many factors that will be forever beyond the reach of all historians or researchers and their endeavors. We all lead storied lives, and we all make sense of past, present, and future through the intersections of our own experiences and the various histories we read and hear. In the following chapters when I refer to the history of a movement or an approach in composition and its potential effect on an informant, it is because the stories that I have used to make sense of the history of writing instruction intersect the informants own history. Whether bibliographic, as in the case of Brereton’s *The Origins of Composition*, narrative, as in the case of Connors *Composition-Rhetoric*, or formalist, as in the case of Berlin’s *Writing Instruction*, no history can attempt to claim a complete record of the past. These histories do help us better understand how we are shaped by cultural forces not by practices in the abstract but by the stories that are told of and within these practices.

Unlike a case study, my focus is not empirical triangulation as much as it is phenomenological understanding. Stephen North, in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field* writes of the case study or clinical approach that it is “more like painting (or collage-making). It builds its image of what is ‘real’ layer by layer, so that there is less need for the same kinds of caution or control: the true lines are expected to emerge from the layering on, not the stripping away” (205). The varied responses generated to my interview questions could be assembled
into a generalizable master-theory, but that is not my intention in the current study. Instead, my motivation is more in sharing insights about technology use in the composition classroom from those outside the community that specialize in such use. Too “clinical” a response might impose too much of my perspective on the responses of my informants. Additionally, case studies gain part of their validity from the collection of different forms of data. In some ways my current approach is a case study in that it is “qualitative descriptive research that closely examines a small number of subjects, and is guided by some theory” (Lauer and Asher 33), but the current study does not use certain features. No other artifacts are observed, and the interviews consist only of my informants’ responses. Much like Deborah Brandt’s decision not to see the writing of her informants in *Literacy in American Lives*, I did not attempt to see the teachers that I interviewed actually teaching in the classroom, nor did I spend time reading their syllabi, materials, or lectures. And much like Brandt, my decision was not entirely logistical, but philosophical as well. As I established in Chapter One, I am actively resisting definitions of technology that only address the material. If I collected material artifacts, I might neglect the “other dimensions” (Brandt 13) that I had set out to understand.

The elements of case study do coalesce with narrative inquiry in this current study. In Chapter One, I argue that three warrants have led to a lack of study of the non-computer specialist’s use of technology in the computer classroom. There could be many ways to read whether or not there is an absence of research here. Nevertheless, the weight I inscribe to each story and subject is idiosyncratically mine. Thomas Newkirk argues that “to write a case study that works, the writer needs to see data in terms of one of a variety of culturally grounded narratives” (135) and in so doing
assigns, “moral weight to the actions of the character” (135). In other words, in reconstructing each story that follows, I am already foregrounding or backgrounding information based on my own set of values and judgments. I address this narrative bias by focusing my questions on reflective nodes I believe to be significant to most teaching narratives. These nodes are literacy, school, and teaching memories in addition to current attitudes about technology and a forecast that directs the previous four nodes into a future setting. This grounded narrative, if you will, constructs a narrative arc to each participant’s responses. Thus, these case studies hold an element of narrative inquiry.

Yet, my methodology could not be considered solely narrative inquiry. In describing narrative inquiry, Mary Kay Kramp argues “narrative privileges the storyteller. It is through their personal narrative, a life as told, rather than through our observations as researchers, that we come to know a life as experienced. The subject of our research is not the object of our observation, but is the narrator, the storyteller” (111). As Connelly and Clandinin argue, “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of these lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (2). My current purpose in writing this dissertation is in satisfying the exit requirements of the university. As such, the dissertation is required to be a single-authored piece. I agree that there are theoretical problems with the “expert” author interpreting the views and experiences of others, or even in my recasting the knowledge shared by my informants in light of my research question. As Hawisher and Selfe argue in their narrative study of technology literacy autobiographies, co-authorship with informants is the most “viable, practical, and ethical resolution” (Literate Lives 13) to this problematic issue. Nevertheless, as much
as I would like to privilege the stories of my subjects by casting my own interpretations as background to these foregrounded voices, the constraints of this situation prevent such a methodology; as such, it would be beyond the scope of this study.

Therefore, this study methodology and its results — although informed by a case study approach, in that the situated practices of my informants are filtered through my research question; and narrative inquiry, in that the primary data are the stories that my informants share — is centered around phenomenological understanding. In other words, for the purposes of naming my methodology, it is a qualitative narrative study. I will now outline further some assumptions about my method of collecting data to support such a methodology.

In *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, Eliot Mishler offers significant criticism of traditional interview methodologies. Mishler argues that the behavioral bias and stimulus-response theories of research interviewing can neglect “essential sociocultural grounds of meaning” (23) and further ignore the importance of the conversation between interviewer and informant as a “speech event” (35). His critique recognizes that most interview methodologies assume that a positivistic, “technical” normalization of questions will produce standardized and generalizable answers for methodical comparison. As Mishler writes, any such methodology ignores the importance of language variation and context in the interview process. Additionally, Mishler points out the “invidious” importance that a structured and systematic interview holds in academic and research settings, and that an interviewer who conducts his or her study with the “flexible strategy of discovery” (28) will appear “less knowledgeable” (28). For Mishler, interviews, as speech events, should always be a discovery, and should always reflect the fact, as Kathleen deMarris recasts, that they
“are not simply exchanges of questions and answers by researchers and participants, but a form of discourse where researcher and participant engage in coconstructing meaning within a particular type of social relationship” (54).

In light of such a critique, the interview process was not intended to be systematic in the wording of the questions it asks for quantitative comparison of de-contextualized answers. Instead, as an interviewer who fully disclosed he was a graduate student working on his dissertation about teaching materials, I attempted to elicit multiple variations and experiences from my informants. In other words, it was not my intention to compare structured experiences against an hypothesis, but instead to discover how individual college writing instructors in different contexts and communities, consider and use technology in their classroom. Because so little research has pursued this purpose, it is important to address the topic of technology use by non-technology specialists with as few preconceptions as possible. Such a seemingly open-ended approach may seem to have little significance, but if, as Mishler’s argument states, the central tenet of the interview is discovery and understanding through context and narrative, then every response offers significance in informing that goal. To reiterate, the central theme is phenomenological understanding. Thus, the interview questions and contexts outlined for this study provide significant perspectives about technology use that might inform further study.

However, there are three notable caveats about using such a method. To begin, as I have already alluded to, a qualitative interview study methodology could be considered problematic because of its lack of standardized method. Standard criteria were used to formulate the research assumptions, select subjects, and solicit responses, but there was variation in the informants’ backgrounds and situations, eventual
questions, and contexts of the actual interviews. Because of this variation, standardized comparisons across the interviews are not really possible. As my purpose was to come to understand variation of technology use and non-use, the variation of informants seemed appropriate and in fact helpful in considering multiple contexts for future study. Variation in questions, though slight, reflect the very argument discussed in the previous section, that interviews and qualitative research should be a form of discourse – a real conversation. Additionally, geographic and teaching context variation, although important in providing a richer analysis, prevented standardized contexts for each interview. In an attempt to offset the vast dissimilarity brought about by these variations, I focused on constructing questions based on five nodes (e.g. memories of literacy, school, and teaching along with attitudes and current impetuses for technology use and forecasting). The questions in each node would then advance chronologically and have certain hooks. These hooks were to bring up classroom experiences and individual choices amid local situations as the informants considered these experiences.

The second caveat has to do with theory and analysis. In their examination of research methods in composition studies, Lauer and Asher outline important components for qualitative and descriptive studies. They write that, primarily, “theory can be said to drive descriptive studies” (17), adding that a descriptive study method and subsequent coding “arises between the data and the researcher’s knowledge of theory” (17). Despite an approach that attempts to uncover with little prejudice the attitudes and uses of technology by the non-technology specialist, I still have framed my study within my own preconceptions and theoretical background. I have outlined in Chapter One how three assumptions may have led to a perceived split between the composition and computers and writing communities, but these assumptions still come from my own
interests and affinity for computers and composition research. Nevertheless, the
descriptive interview approach is useful in addressing a topic which has a theoretical
deficit. As argued earlier, up to this point, little work has looked at technology use by
non-technology specialists. Still, there is a larger theoretical undercurrent to this
methodology – the theory that shapes the current study is phenomenological rather
than formalist or critical. deMarris describes how a phenomenological approach
attempts to uncover the “meaning people place on their lived experiences” (56). This
approach purposely withholds “judgment in order to allow the weight of the data to
suggest new conclusions” (Lauer and Asher 25). It furthermore establishes the subjects’
responses as ideological and culturally situated praxis (Sullivan and Porter 27; 91) and
not just data to be dissected.

This is a long and convoluted way of saying that the analysis framework that
follows in the last part of this chapter is a result of the interviews already having been
conducted. And although one could argue that I have constructed a formalist
framework even as I argue that it is not my purpose to do so—especially in light of such
varied interview contexts—I do so from a theory-building stance, looking primarily at
how the theoretical warrants I speculate about in Chapter One interact, intersect and
construct “relationships and patterns seen in the data” (Lauer and Asher 29).

The final caveat is that informant narratives about their experiences in teaching
and education can suffer from imprecise recall and purposeful emplotment. As
Connelly and Clandinin citing Crite describe it, narrating a story creates “the illusion of
causality” (7). They continue by saying that, “a sequence of events looked at backward
has the appearance of casual necessity and, looked at forward, has the sense of a
teleological, intentional pull to the future” (7). Brandt adds that people “refashion a
memory in terms of its significance for how things have turned out, whether in terms of personal circumstances or shared culture” (12). On one hand, I resign myself to this caveat, recognizing as Walter Fisher does, “narration comes closer to capturing the experience of the world, simultaneously appealing to the various senses, to reason and emotion, to intellect and imagination, and to fact and value” (392). On the other, I recognize that the responses here are just a very narrow glimpse of an informant’s past through his or her own lens, and that any relationship considered is just as likely a result of my questions as a result of the informants’ lived experience (Little 31). Connelly and Clandinin argue that informants telling stories of their pasts would be overwhelmed if they had to write an entire record or if they had to latch on to a theme or purpose before they even had a chance to reflect on a focused moment or question. Nevertheless, the very act of telling the story, which may have been either revised and rehearsed many times or constructed at the immediacy of my question, still captures much of the experience of my informant and his or her subsequent motivations and attitudes toward the situation in which it takes place (Fisher 392).

Fully aware of these narrative possibilities and problems, I endeavored to write questions that attempted to elicit experiences in narrative form even if the constraints of my interviews prevented my informants from exploring fully the situations of those experiences. After all, “time and place work together to create the experiential quality of narrative” (Connelly and Clandinin 8). Using a distinction raised by David Carr in *Time, Narrative, and History*, Connelly and Clandinin argue that in narrative explanation, “the past conveys significance, the present conveys value, and the future conveys intention” (9). My interviews were never to be simply stories or autobiographies, but a revelation about what it means to teach writing in a university setting informed by the
instructors past experiences within educational settings. Thus, the chronology of each section of my interview script held questions first about my informants’ past education and experience, then about their current teaching situations, and then about what they believe the future of writing instruction might look like. In this way, I used the chronological qualities of narrative inquiry to lead my informants to reveal their own attitudes about technology in the composition classroom through their own storied experiences.

Method

Informants

There were two pools of informants that were selected for this study. The first pool was internal to the university where I am a student; a total of ten potential informants were selected from full-time writing instructors within the first-year writing program. The second pool of informants was chosen by randomly selecting universities and colleges from each United States time-zone and thus region, so that the final pool consisted of two instructors from Pacific, two from Mountain, one form Central, and four from Eastern. Potential informants were selected from each pool based the following protocol:

- The university had a webpage and link to the English or communication department in which writing was taught.

- The potential informant was listed on the department or university website as a teacher for a first-year writing class in Spring 2005 or Fall 2005. I also made sure that each potential informant was not listed as a program administrator.
• No attention was paid as to whether the instructor had his or her own web presence outside of that provided by the university or department. I included only full-time or otherwise non-graduate student classified instructors. Most of the universities published what degrees each faculty member had on a web page or pages.

• The potential subjects were then researched as to make sure they did not appear as primary authors or co-authors in any article in Computers and Composition: An International Journal, Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology and Pedagogy, or Computers and Composition: Online.

An introducing email with a description of the study was sent to the selected informants in both groups with instructions that they should respond to my query within two weeks (see Appendix D). A week after the initial email, I sent a follow-up email asking again whether they had considered my study, and reminding them that they could inform me if they were not interested. Of the total pool of informants, two people emailed me and each said that he or she was not interested, five responded with an interest to participate, and the other twelve did not respond to either the initial request or follow-up. Via email, I scheduled interviews with those who expressed interest, and reminded each to send back the permission to participate letter I originally had addressed to him or her (Appendix C). Two people faxed their signed permissions, and the other three returned their permissions to my campus mailbox. All told, I had five informants, varied in region, age, and the type of college or university at which they taught.
The interview questions were prepared beforehand (Appendices A and B), and were subject to Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board approval. I interviewed two informants face-to-face and three informants online via email, with one follow-up phone interview with one of the online participants. All told, there were three different contexts for the interviews, each creating its own set of constraints and possibilities.

I had immediate access to two of my informants (Anne and Lynn), so I conducted those interviews face-to-face, using an interview script (Appendix A) as a guide. My interview with Lynn lasted thirty-one minutes and my interview with Anne lasted fifty-six minutes. Although we covered each research node in both interviews, the interview with Lynn had fewer tangents and thus was shorter. These two interviews were recorded via MiniDisc and transferred to a personal computer for ease of manual transcription using Steinberg WaveLab 3.0.

Conducting interviews online adds another medium through which dialogue is transposed, but the online forum provides a number of promising possibilities. As is often the case, geography prevents face-to-face interviews. Although the telephone has been used for decades to overcome the geographic dilemma, it too is a medium that
transposes and filters responses. In fact, I encountered more faulty inferences via my phone interview with Jenna than I encountered in either of the other two contexts. For the purposes of the current study, I settled on an email format for my initial communication and final questions for three respondents. After initial communication, designed to establish rapport with the participant, I provided a revised version of the questions, first pilot-tested to gauge time requirements. This questionnaire asked respondents to record their answers with a lengthy response. In one case, a respondent emailed me with further information after he had already responded initially, and in another case, I received a further clarification email from an informant based on something that she thought about since I originally interviewed her. The interview process is intended to increase an “understanding of the contextual influences on actions and behaviors” the informants enact (Schram 61), but my comprehensive email questionnaire with follow-up questions provided not only a generous amount of data, but data similar to that provided from my face-to-face interviews (e.g. ~1,700 word responses via email versus ~2,500 word responses in face-to-face interviews). In this case, and for this study, email was more than adequate in providing a forum for interviewing my informants with data rich in possibilities for inquiry.

Of course, with any written or oral response, there exist risks of misinterpretation and ambiguity. In written communication, familiar use of “ electronic paralanguage” (i.e. emoticons and abbreviations) suggests that interview participants would be able to express feelings and emotions, but ultimately and as part of a professional context (i.e. formal research forum), such paralanguage was nonexistent, and my informants may have viewed emoticons with skepticism or may misinterpreted the use of less often used abbreviations (Horn ctd. in Mann and Stewart 135). In future email-based interviewing
and questionnaires, it should be left to the researcher’s discretion as to what is an appropriate use of electronic paralanguage and to query if there is a possibility of misunderstanding. Besides the ambiguity of electronic paralanguage, the other potential problem with an online collection of data has to do with my research question — asking informants to talk about their computer use in the composition classroom although using a computer may have influenced the results I received. To alleviate these concerns, I had fully intended to respond to each with a follow-up interview via the phone, but the responses from two of my respondents more than adequately provided data to each of my inquiry nodes.

The informants who consented to an email interview were contacted via email establishing a timeframe for the interview with instructions for accessing the questions, and including what the interview would involve (Smith-Stoner and Weber ctd. in Mann and Stewart 148). I gave each a deadline of three weeks to complete the questions. I received the responses with the exception of one within that timeframe:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>13 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>20 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>30 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Email Response Time

None of the participants emailed me to ask for clarification or otherwise inquire about the study once they had received the list of questions (Appendix B). Though I did not specify how each respondent should return his or her responses, assuming each would just send me their responses via plain-text email, I received one attached WordPerfect document, one attached Microsoft Word 2003 document, and one plain-text email response. I read through each of the informants’ responses looking for either confusing or uncertain answers, though none of the responses revealed anything significant. In
the case of Jenna, there was a good deal of embarrassment about technology in her responses, so I created a list of follow-up questions which I asked via a phone interview about two weeks later.

**Analysis**

For the purpose of this dissertation, I offer a framework based primarily on the responses of the participants. The responses to my research questions were narrative, in response to questions from five general nodes, each later developed into what I classify as pedagogy impetus, technology use, and technology attitude. Narrative inquiry, as a phenomenological method, considers responses solely on what the participant remembers and constructs in response to a question. As research is still unresolved in providing a complete coding system for interpreting typos, emoticons, punctuation additions, and usage patterns in the online, email responses, I did not interpret these orthographic and paralinguistic features as anything more than what they appeared to be. Furthermore, the results of each face-to-face and phone interview was inferred only from the articulated content. For the current study, the eventual responses informed the following framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Use</th>
<th>Impetus for Pedagogy</th>
<th>Attitude toward technology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentative</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Social / local</td>
<td>Complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Table 3: Analysis Framework

In the subsequent chapters, I will share the responses from my informants in response to the five nodes, completing each chapter with how each informant fits into the above framework. First, however, I would like to describe how the above framework was
derived, how each term is being defined, and how it can be useful in reading cyborg era narratives.

Technology Use

As I argued in the first chapter under warrant one, all teachers use technology in the classroom, when technology is defined as material and rhetorical artifacts that embody a system or method of knowledge making and communication. One can read pedagogy as a technology in this capacity, and connections between the pedagogy the teacher is enacting in the classroom and his or her use of technology are possible. Gail Hawisher in “Blinding Insights: Classification Schemes and Software for Literacy Instruction” creates such a connection between various software tools in relation to the various pedagogical classifications in composition that Berlin, Hillocks, and others have defined. However, most other computers and composition research tends to focus on the tools that facilitate or limit a certain pedagogy, with Jeffrey Galin and Joan Latchow arguing, in fact, that “pedagogy should precede technology” (45), seemingly ignoring the way that material technologies intersect with epistemic technologies; or as Drucker defines technology, both a way and a material means.

For the current study, the question nodes about literacy and school reflections asked my informants to recall supplements to instruction they had seen used or used themselves. Because all technologies of instruction have multiple qualities and in keeping the importance of context and individual agency in technology use, I classify how the technology was being used not the technology’s potential or designed use. Thus, the classifications of technology use are Presentative, Distributive, Communicative, Interactive, or Creative, with neither being exclusive to the other. There is an important point about my use of these classifications that needs to be
clarified. I use the terms to name the technology (e.g. presentation technology or interactive technology) even though I am often refereeing to both the feature of the technology and its actual use. I do so because most technologies have embedded or dominant uses that they were designed for and these uses are in practice more often than more innovative uses of those technologies. For example, presenting a film via projector or television is very different than remixing, re-editing a film. However, the traditional film projector makes turning this presentation technology into a creative or interactive technology very difficult. VCRs, DVDs, and computers make such innovative uses more practical, but they still may be used in traditional or more dominant ways.

Though millions of technologies could be named and classified, what follows are descriptions and examples most prevalent in the writing classroom:

Presentative – Presentative technologies facilitate showing information to a mass audience. Such technologies as projectors, including film, overhead and LCD, SmartBoards, contemporary uses of the whiteboard, televisions and various audio playing devices all have primarily presentation qualities. This also includes “reading” software such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, and the many “players” that can be downloaded or purchased, including Apple Quicktime. Additionally, proscenium classroom design, and the much earlier Lancasterian “alphabet wheel” (Crain 67) and the optical telegraph are presentation technologies.

Distributive – These technologies facilitate distribution of information or data. The printing press, or print in general followed by the book are early distributive technologies. Books distribute information from an author to most often a single reader.

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3 William A. Alcott's *Slate and Black Board Exercises* (1857) differentiates between the mobile Slate that students would use to practice various literacies and the Black Board which was to be hung “in full view of the whole school” (9). Modern whiteboards or chalkboards are often used more in the presentative sense of the teacher writing information for all to see.
who then either distributes it to another or maintains ownership for another use. The dominant use of this technology is the transfer of information from one person and his or her ideology to a mass audience who really is often just a single, imaginary person in the writer's mind, and thus “always a fiction” (Ong “The Writer’s Audience” 54) at the point the text is written. Distributive technologies seem to have the most influence on traditional education. The Internet, as a technology and not necessarily its concomitant sub-technologies, is the new distributive model which has challenged the book.

Communicative – Communicative technologies mediate or facilitate communication. Such technologies as the telephone and email (including listservs and online discussion forums) are the most prevalent communicative technologies. Communicative technologies have changed education by removing the classroom from the physical space of the institution but still maintaining the interaction with a teacher and fellow students unlike the television courses developed and encouraged in the 1950s and 1960s (Oppenheimer 5; 51-2).

Interactive – Interactive technologies are based on a model that simulates situational circumstances, and thus provides limited options. Such technologies as CAI or even earlier “programmable” teaching machines like Sidney Pressey’s “Automatic Teacher” (Petrina 305) or the early educational teaching machines endorsed by B. F. Skinner (Oppenheimer 4) are examples of interactive technologies. I invoke Skinner here because the theory behind the model is behaviorist in nature. A number of interactive technologies ignore current social and cognitive theories of knowledge-making even as they persist in contemporary education, including the multiple choice test, because they are easy to assess even if they do not replicate real experiences (see Dewey).
Creative – Creative technologies are more broadly defined as often ubiquitous or general technologies that facilitate or enable the creation of other technologies. The computer or the pencil are such technologies. We also might imagine the word processor as a creative technology, though there are many limits and other potentials built into the word processor. Within the limits of this dissertation, I refer to creative technologies as those which break the expected use of a technology. For example, though not seen in any of my subjects, we might consider the use of *PowerPoint* as an invention device for writing in which the writer uses the software to organize or synthesize his or her ideas as a creation technology.

These five classes are not meant to be definitive, but instead are meant to demonstrate certain potential and features of technologies often seen in the composition classroom. Although writing and language as technologies also serve functions like memory as in some of the earliest uses of semiotic systems (see Harris), this larger analysis is well beyond the scope of this dissertation and dealt with in more appropriate sources. Similarly, the computer and its associated technologies has destructive, organizing, and simulative potentials that also are all beyond the scope of this study.

As seems apparent, there is a value judgment about each teacher’s pedagogy embedded within these classifications, especially in light of the broader definition of technology that I have outlined. It must be said, however, that the methodology and the realized study are meant to look at the intersections of epistemic and material technologies, not each separate from the other. As a result, I will make connections between a pedagogy of presentation (Hillocks 113) or current-traditionalism (Berlin *Writing Instruction* 36) only when apparent, recognizing the limits of my methodology in not directly observing the teaching practices of my informants.
Impetus for Pedagogy

I use the term pedagogy as both the theory and practice or act of teaching (Alexander 513), though as I state earlier, the classroom environment was not observed in the current study. I raise the two elements of a pedagogy definition if only to remind that what a teacher practices in the classroom can be different from what they articulate or theorize that they do. And these choices, both in theory and practice, are motivated from within and without. Echoing Inman’s call in *Computers and Writing*, I argue in Chapter One, under warrant two, of the importance of understanding the various contexts that influence or resist personal agency in a classroom situation. From an individual’s desire to try a particular activity to a university’s decision to enact a campus-wide assessment system, teachers are often both rocketing toward a frontier and swallowed by a metropolis (Reynolds).

My informants, although few in number, did confirm the little research that exists on this topic as well as my earlier speculation that pedagogy, although influenced by a number of contributing factors, is mostly a result of the agency of the writing teacher. In the computers and writing research, teacher-scholars privilege computing technologies in their classroom even as they argue for its critical use. Charles Moran’s recounting of his struggle as a computers and writing teacher attempting to teach in a non-computer classroom reveals the importance of understanding how an individual’s choice in a particular context influences that teacher’s perception; Moran writes, “I often found myself uncomfortable, irritable, even occasionally angry at my teaching situation, deprived of computers” (1-2). Additionally, there is a rhetoric of promise as to computers’ roles in shaping a positive context for the composition classroom (Corbert viii; Hawisher 54), or the role that institutions, both locally imagined and traditionally
conceived, have in shaping the teacher, the student, and the technologies there
employed (Taylor 120).

A teacher’s educational history plays a significant role in the future pedagogy of
any teacher (Bishop), but such influence is difficult to determine barring multiple
interviews with teachers of a single informant. Though I name four classifications, the
pedagogies described by informants in the study were difficult to name or define in
wholly these terms. So as an overture, I propose that each teacher’s pedagogy is first
and foremost situated in their own history. This is not to argue that their educational
experiences determine their pedagogy or practice, but that their experiences frame the
types of teaching they expect and consider authentic. In Brown, Collins and Duguid
influential “Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning,” they write:

The activities of a domain are framed by its culture. Their meaning and
purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among present and
past members. Activities thus cohere in a way that is, in theory, if not
always in practice, accessible to members who move within the social
framework. These coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities are
authentic, according to the definition of the term we use here. Authentic
activities then, are most simply defined as the ordinary practices of the
culture.

The practices of the teachers surveyed here are normalized through their experiences
first and foremost, and only later if at all, are they challenged by theory or practices not
familiar to their own backgrounds. Consequently, individual agency is never fully free
from the contexts and negotiations that the individual has engaged in. It is individual
agency framed by these past contexts that most determine the types of teaching we
might see in the classroom. When I refer to individual agency, it is this complex condition, what Hawisher and Selfe refer to as the “cultural ecology” (*Literate Lives* 223), that I am referring to.

With so many variables at play in the contested space of the classroom, it is difficult to imagine demarcating one, five or twenty different contextual influences. However, through my study, I came to understand four different influences for pedagogy from the informants. Pedagogy influenced by history were those practices that were familiar or seemed effective from the education or literacy experiences of the informants. Individual pedagogy choices were those practices based on the teaching experience of the informant. Some informants talked about local or social pedagogies practiced at their universities and colleges, so I created the social/local distinction. Finally, certain technologies and classroom spaces create environmental influences or limits to pedagogies. Many issues arise as to what specific epistemic or material constraints lurk under what my informants are able to articulate, but I did endeavor to ask questions about their individual and local situations in order to hold my informants to the same situations that Inman asks the members of the computers and writing community to reflect upon.

**Attitudes toward Technology**

I simplify the attitudes toward technology into the three categories reflective of Sibylle Gruber’s “The good, the bad, the complex: *Computers and Composition* in transition,” itself a reference to Albert Borgmann’s *Technology and the character of contemporary life: A philosophical inquiry*. Although Gruber reveals a linear progression in work published in the journal *Computers and Composition*, the presumption seems to be that all teachers will someday reach the complex stage, reading
the myriad of technological choices available to the writing classroom in pluralistic and critical ways. I attempted to uncover uses of older technologies in uncritical or simple ways to counter such thinking, though my current study was of such limited scope that there is no way to tell whether such a critique could be made. Nevertheless, informants revealed attitudes to technology from their own experiences that were positive, negative or complex. Those teachers who felt computers had much promise for the classroom usually had little experience with technology. Those who had attitudes that echoed Cuban’s view that, “they [teachers] will either resist or be indifferent to changes that they see as irrelevant to their practice, that increase their burdens without adding benefits to their students’ learning, or that weaken their control of the classroom” (71) I classified as negative. Finally, those teachers who were critical though optimistic toward technology, who revealed the problems along with the possibilities of technology integration into a writing classroom, I classified as complex.

As I argue in Chapter One under warrant three, using Gruber’s classification as a guide, a dichotomy is created between “us” and “them,” the specialist and the non-specialist in an unusual way. The teacher who uses computer technology as instrument, integrates it into his or her pedagogy, and willingly accepts student’s uses of the Internet for research, Microsoft Word for composing, and online chat for conferencing can generate as much rebuke by the computers and writing community as a teacher who does not use technology. As Cynthia Selfe describes it:

Computer-using teachers enthusiastically endorse computers in their classrooms, but all too often they do not teach students how to pay critical attention to the issues generated by technology use. Teachers who choose
not to use computers in class believe that their decision absolves them, and their students from paying critical attention to technology issues. (23)

With technology, broadly defined, changing in such significant ways, the computers and writing community can seem to hide within the most innovative or the least mainstream technology for the simple fact that it invites the least amount of critique because it requires the most engaged literacy. However, my reading and subsequent framework for technology attitudes offers a significant contrast to such an intricate understanding of critical pedagogy (or critically motivated pedagogy): Critical uses of technology do not necessarily posit the same criteria for selection across communities and discourses. In other words, teachers actively consider the political and cultural uses of technology in their classrooms, even as their choices seem more opaque to those privy only to the outcome of their decisions.

This framework offers a more complex way to read teachers of writing and their use of technology in the writing classroom. In the subsequent chapters I will show through the individual literacy, education, and teaching narratives of my informants how various influences to pedagogical motivation contribute to critical users of teaching technology, and offer a means by which to understand technology from teachers of writing outside the computers and writing community.
CHAPTER THREE
AARON AND ANNE: CREATIVE WRITING, COMPOSITION AND THE LIMITS OF TECHNOLOGY

I think [computer technology] is a tool that is really useful, but the schools just are not ready. I doubt that they will be ready to be honest. The technology will always be well ahead of what the schools can do realistically. Also, the technology needs to be simple enough for the students to use; otherwise class time is spent on teaching technologies.

– Aaron

Humanities is so much talking. Talking and thinking. And the computer doesn’t always help with that. //laughter// This is the girl who spends at least 10 hours a day on instant messenger.

– Anne

Introduction

Aaron and Anne bookend either side of what has been labeled either Generation X by the popular media or the Thirteenth Generation by William Strauss and Neil Howe (328). To classify either as belonging to a group with shared values and shared cultural and historical forces acting upon him or her is certainly problematic. After all, the primary reasons for the research methodology outlined in Chapter Two was, in fact, to explore education, literacy and technology motivations of individual informants, not the larger cultural and social conditions that potentially formed either’s outlook on education, technology and said culture. My individual focus, however, is not to suggest that there are no external forces acting on these informants. Quite the contrary. As I outline in Chapter Two, I am looking at situated action as perceived by my informants, not culturally determined action; in other words, as Brown, Collins and Duguid write, “The activities of a domain are framed by its culture,” not determined by it. In fact, I invoke their generation cohort here to show a potential counter to the expectations that Generation X has placed upon it, and to demonstrate that the ubiquity of technologies in
education are not the revolutionary shift on/off this generation that Hawisher and Selfe seem to suggest in *Literate Lives*. Hawisher and Selfe triangulated their informant’s responses through larger social and historical forces; however, because Generation X, as a pop media created conglomerate, has yet to run its full course, the prevailing voices in describing the forces are the very same media that have so named the generation. Furthermore, despite Strauss and Howe’s “historical” study of generations in the United States, their motivation was in providing a predictable pattern for business clients rather than a critical study of generational attitudes and expectations. Hawisher and Selfe’s “Future of Literacy” participants included in *Literate Lives*, who also fall in the Thirteenth Generation, were technologically savvy, and very active in implementing technology into their educations. Aaron and Anne similarly were technologically savvy, but both presented a more complex “future of literacy,” in which technology is just another tool for communication, often fallible, and often failing in education to the point of frustration. Aaron and Anne both shared a cynicism about the promises of technology in tune with the larger cynicism of their generation, both were diverse in their experiences and opinions about education and teaching, and both were engaged students, yet in very different ways. These qualities are representative of the arch/stereo-types outlined by Strauss and Howe, even as my informants grew up under the same historical conditions as Hawisher and Selfe’s “Future of Literacy” informants; yet, Aaron and Anne presented a very different future of technology in higher education.

This chapter is split into three parts. The first section is focused on Aaron, a community college assistant professor on the West Coast. The next section is focused on Anne, a full-time, non-tenure-track writing instructor in a midsized public university in the Midwest. The third section offers an analysis as detailed in Chapter Two of each
informants’ responses, primarily looking at how technology use, impetus for pedagogy, and attitudes toward technology might provide a means to understand the uses and non-uses of technology in the writing classroom.

In this chapter, Aaron and Anne are presented as they described their experiences as students and teachers. Each was asked similar questions (see interview protocol, Appendices A and B), though each took their responses in unique directions. There is linearity to each informant’s section, with response of earlier literacy memories preceding those of responses about their later education and teaching, though there is some recursivity and forecasting. In many instances, I situate informant’s descriptions of their experiences in historical and theoretical conditions of composition as a means of providing more details in considering the potential influences each may have had – in other words, framing their actions. Although this may seem similar to Hawisher and Selfe, I want to emphasize that my focus here is in looking at individual choices and attitudes toward technology, not the overt influences of larger cultural issues. Though Hawisher and Selfe focus a great deal of time in their study on the cultural and historical influences on each of their informants, they also point out that “humans themselves...shape the circumstances of their lives in countless important ways” (9), and it is from this perspective that I questioned my informants. This chapter presents two subjects who can be seen counter to the expectations of their generation, but also two subjects who have been very much shaped by an implicit literacy and education experience more than either one may have realized.

Aaron: Limits and Possibilities at the Community College

One of Aaron’s earliest literacy memories was a limerick he wrote as part of a school assignment at age ten:
I once had a teacher named Ed
who had a very hollow head
he decided to fill it
with a BB and a Bullet
and the very next day he was dead.

Although “punished” for the poem, he eventually was placed into a program for gifted writers. He continued to write on similar topics such as Jack the Ripper throughout his youth, and he continued to be punished for it. “The more creative I was, the more I was criticized,” he said. His early memories reflect the idea of writing as a means of subversion and active means of affecting others. In retrospect, Aaron told me, “I think I started to see writing as a dangerous act, and I still see that today. In fact, the movie Quills is a good view regarding my philosophy behind writing. Writing has the possibility of changing people, challenging minds, and destroying much.” For Aaron, technology, whether writing, the computer, or his pedagogy, was a “social act” in which the ideologies and attitudes of an audience could be changed, challenged, and disrupted. Unfortunately for Aaron, the lack of support for computers and their concomitant technologies by his institution left him at a loss in enacting the social activism that he envisioned for his classroom.

Aaron earned an AA in Liberal Arts in 1992 and a BA in English in 1995. He went on to take graduate classes in composition and rhetoric, but then entered a prestigious creative writing program, eventually earning an MFA. When interviewed, he was a tenure-track assistant professor at a community college on the West Coast of the United States. He taught a 4/4 load, mostly composition, though occasionally he had the opportunity to teach a film class or creative writing class. Although relatively young at
thirty-six, Aaron had been teaching composition at the college or university level for eight years. A minister for several years, he said that “essentially ministry and teaching are the same thing. It is serving others and imparting knowledge.”

Aaron recalled that he had always enjoyed school, “each new quarter was like opening a Christmas present.” Though he was deaf as a child, it was later corrected, and he learned English at age four. He became very interested in writing. In college, he took “tons of writing classes: literature, composition, creative writing, linguistics.” It is interesting to note that he considered the literature and linguistics classes as writing classes. In one instance, Aaron took a college literature class from a linguistics teacher who relied on Aaron to help with certain teaching tasks because, as she told him, she was just there “trying to make an extra buck.” In his writing classes, he remembered using textbooks like “the Hacker manual [A Writer’s Reference by Diana Hacker] and St. Martin’s Guide [to Writing by Rise Axelrod and Charles Cooper],” but he said that he did not keep those books. He also remembered mimeographed and Xeroxed handouts, the former because “the ink would rub off and stink” and the latter “because they looked burned around the edges.” He recalled that in one class he had “ten books that seemed unnecessary.” In these cases Aaron’s experiences with the textbook and handouts were very general; his immediate response was to their materiality and not to their content. As he had no memories of how these items were specifically integrated into the class, though he did remember “using” them, it is difficult to draw conclusions about how this mainstream distribution technology—textbooks and handouts—affectedithe view of the role of teacher and class in his literacy education. As I pointed out in Chapter One, textbooks and print technologies have embedded ideologies (Welch; see also Rose; Connors) just as current computer technologies do (Hawisher and Selfe “Rhetoric of
Technology”). However, how a particular textbook or material is used is often a reflection of individual and local institutional values (Miles 6). Aaron did remember “using” the textbook, but there was no clear motivation (e.g. teacher-directed, resource, expectation) for why he used it. Thus, although *A Writer’s Reference* and *The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing* were two of the more popular texts for first-year composition when he was a student, little else can be surmised as to the impact each had on Aaron’s consideration of future texts in his own teaching.

Of the particular teaching strategies or pedagogies that he remembered as a student, he said that when he went to college, the teacher used “process—with drafts. Coming from high school, this idea of process was significant.” The only assignment that he could remember was one in which he had to write a personal essay on his date of birth. Both the approach and assignment are indicative of the period when he attended college. The process approach to writing, as Lad Tobin writes, is partly “an emphasis on the process, student choice and voice, revision, self-expression” and partly a “critique (or even outright rejection) of traditional, product-driven, rules-based correctness-obsessed writing instruction” (“Introduction” 5; see also Miller 110). However, the process approach did generate a lot of critique by the time Aaron attended college, suggesting that the assignment he remembered, motivated or directed personal writing, was created by an instructor in some response to the critique. There is a possibility that the assignment has one of two other derivatives. Berlin and others have addressed problems with early process approach theories as subjective rhetorics (*Writing Instruction* 145) that “den[y] the place of intersubjective, social process in shaping reality” (*Writing Instruction* 146). Aaron’s assignment, asking him to research his date of birth but in a personal, subjective style, could be interpreted as a very simple
reflection of this critique. Although an arguable distinction, the process approach eventually followed either subjective-based or objective-based research patterns. The subjective process, itself a reflection of the individual’s struggle to make meaning through language, as Tobin points out, was exemplified by freewriting and invention as an individual act (see Elbow, Murray); the objective process focused on a research agenda that gave writing teachers a topic to research, namely the cognitive and social “processes” of writing (see Flower and Hayes; Moffett; Britton). A bridge between these two approaches was George Hillock’s Research on Written Composition, a meta-analysis that attempted to assess the research on the writing process with the impact and influence of the research on the writing classroom. Coupled with a re-emerging, socially cognizant view of writing and education, Hillock’s work implicitly argues for an approach described by its author as “inquiry” in which a situation or set of data are presented to the writer, and he or she must address the topic with the data (180-1). When Aaron attended college, these views could have been influential to the teachers and assignments that were produced during the era. A second possibility as to the origins of the assignment given to Aaron is less complex – the assignment is simply a result of lore (North 23), and the tradition of “topic lists” in which a simple declaration is given, and the author responds to it. In fact, Richard Green Parker’s 1851 edition of Aids to English Composition lists hundreds of such possibilities, number thirty-three of which under Subjects for Conferences is, “Contemporary and subsequent narratives, of historical events” (406).

As a teacher, Aaron said that he was “very interested in process.” His own education was reflective of a pedagogy that “gives student’s choices” and focused on allowing students “all semester to work on assignments.” He said that he distrusted
formulas and “fill in the blanks,” and that “students have to start with nothing and come up with something” for him to be an effective teacher. Though he said he tried to “keep up to date with modern theory,” he did not elaborate much on what modern theory he was specifically informed by. However, he did mention that his materials come from “textbooks and experience” and that his position and experience in “three worlds (literature, composition, and creative writing)” helped him in every class he taught. As he described it, this pedagogy could very much fit the mold of an informed composition teacher in the eighties or even seventies. As the textbooks currently in circulation perpetuate a classicism and established practice, the materials drawn from them most likely have these conditions as well. Kathleen Welch, echoing Thomas Kuhn’s comments on science textbooks (Kuhn 137), states rather bluntly of composition textbooks, “few are constructed with any overt indication that composition theory has ever existed” (269). I dwell on Aaron’s comments here not as some kind of judgment as to their value, but to remind readers that what we read as modern or contemporary is in fact read through an optic of our immediate experience and the “normal” (Kuhn 138) or established practice that has a history of publication.

When asked whether there was any technology used in his classes when he attended college, Aaron said, “I remember projectors. Not many computers. I remember typing classes with typewriters. To be honest, I don’t remember much technology being used other than TV and VCR.” His experiences are of note here because Aaron later developed a great interest in using computer technologies in his pedagogy, in addition to the presentation technologies that he was exposed to during his own education. More will be made of this in the analysis section of this chapter. However, for a generation defined and dependant on television, the influx of these
presentation technologies into the college classroom might seem common, even as they remain untouched most of the time, like mounted trophies to a long ago hunt – waiting for a space shuttle disaster or assassination to recapture their relevance.

Computer technologies present an interesting conflict in Aaron’s pedagogy, as he described them:

I used to use computer classrooms, but the computers were poorly maintained, and then the Internet was eventually removed. The school then went to a single computer class that all teachers had to apply for on different days. That became a major pain, so I don't anymore.

I will use the smart classrooms, but again these are often not maintained properly and only work half the time. I will use power point when I can get a projector.

This condition of computer and presentation technologies at Aaron’s college is difficult to compare to or generalize from other colleges based on the data currently available. Two notable sources for what little data that does exist are Educause, an organization that collects statistics on information technologies in higher education, and U. S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics. According to the most recent Digest of Educational Statistics from NCES, 84.6% of college students use computers in their classes while at college (Table 428), but such data does not differentiate between different types of institutions of higher learning. In another study, though differently motivated, Educause’s most recent survey of college and university CTOs found that Associates colleges spend the least amount of concern on support and service and their IT money investment is fifth behind administrative systems and infrastructure (Maltz, Deblois, et al.) Such data snippets position the situation
described by Aaron as a seemingly common though unfortunate circumstance of the community college, with too little money and support. Such snippets also open a significant gap for future research.

Nevertheless, Aaron described some technology utilization that supported his pedagogy despite the lack of support he received. For one, he relied on technology that students had outside the classroom space. He described his use of computer mediated communication (CMC) with students in his writing classes. “I use email and listservs in most classes, and I find this is really effective (although some students become very scared using such materials for the first time).” He also took advantage of what resources the campus did have in presentation technologies, using VCRs and DVDs in his lessons. The latter is a reflection of his education experience. The former, however, presents an interesting and often common experience of instructors’ technology use. Whether it is to be lauded or not, higher education institutions are often behind the marketplace in integrating the most current technologies into the classroom settings (Hawisher, et al 262), a curious dilemma considering the development and maintenance of some of the more advanced networking technologies were first implemented in universities. However, Associates or community college teachers, as indicated earlier, must come to rely on external, marketplace technologies, as well as patterns of that technology use, because of a lack of funding and support that these colleges provide for their teachers. Even undergraduate populations who use computers the least outside of the classroom—only 65% of black, non-Hispanic students (NCES, Table 427)—comprise a significant percentage of technology users compared to those students confined to a classroom without computers or a university with little to no computer access, both situations yielding a far smaller percentage of classroom use.
Aaron’s use of CMC also reflected his pedagogy, and by extension his own educational experience in two important ways. On one hand, his use of email to correspond with students about their writing and the class provided an opportunity for individualized instruction and also epitomized the sort of process approach that Aaron experienced in his composition theory classes and in his own college experience. In the ideal of this forum, Aaron operates as another reader of a writer’s text. As Peter Elbow describes it in Writing Without Teachers, “If you are stuck writing or trying to figure something out, there is nothing better than finding one person, or more, to talk to” (49). Unfortunately, what so often happens is that classroom power relationships are replicated in single correspondence so that Aaron was often serving as a teacher to students rather than a reader to writers? And this was not Aaron’s fault. Often students utilize the distance invoked by email to talk about due dates, absenteeism, and other managerial matters of the classroom as a means of avoiding conflict.

On the other hand, Aaron’s use of a listserv to continue class discussion outside of the physical classroom space, encouraged student-to-student communication as part of a larger, conscious pedagogical goal. When asked about technology and pedagogy, Aaron remarked “Part of my philosophy is the idea of writing as a social act. Computers and networking can open up this philosophy, but sometimes working at a computer, the illusion is again the separation of the individual from the society. It isn’t true, but sometimes people see computers as isolating.” Such a view recognizes the social nature of writing and language use, and attempts to upset the traditional “initiation, reply, and evaluation” (Faigley 180) of teacher-motivated classroom discussion. Such a lack of turn-taking and authority allows more “free-wheeling: participants are not limited to connecting their remarks to the previous comment but rather can pick up on a topic
mentioned” (Cooper and Selfe 853). Furthermore, it could be argued that a collaborative atmosphere is facilitated by online discussions as a means of increasing the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 187); in other words, such interaction increases what the each participant can accomplish by collaborating with more diverse and experienced people (Warschauer 471). This is an utopist view of CMC to be sure. Though research disagrees as to any definitive effect of media in CMC in equalizing participants—a study by Bhappu, Griffith and Northcraft arguing that it levels participant authority by eliminating difference; or, scholarship by Blair, and Cooper and Selfe, arguing that it creates a place to explore diversity of cultural and gender differences—CMC is another classroom forum by which participants carry on the topics and discussions of the classroom outside the temporal and physical limits of the class. Much more could be speculated about online conversations and their possibility to create more diverse and collaborative opportunities for learning, but research on the topic of CMC is contradictory and the limits of the current study preclude analysis of the online conversations that Aaron facilitates for his classroom.

What should be highlighted in Aaron’s experience were his frustrations with the lack of support he was provided at his college. Aaron responded with great consternation when asked about technology in his classroom. He said, “I would use Blackboard but the schools require training before use (even though I already know Blackboard), and I don’t have time for a month long class on the subject before I can get a permit to use it.” Even though he had experience with the Content Management System (CMS) Blackboard, he was not allowed to use it. Such a bureaucratic measure was probably instituted for financial or administrative reasons. It is more efficient to have one training seminar, collecting all of the instructors in one place to teach them
how to maintain and integrate the system into their classes than it is to hire a support staff to help with day to day operations and troubleshooting of such a complex CMS. However, to Aaron, it appeared to be just another misinformed roadblock to getting technology integrated into his classrooms. He lamented:

I think the major problem is that the schools really aren't equipped at the level I am. I get frustrated at the lack of funds and availability of the technologies. I feel like the schools talk the talk but do not take the walk with tech. It is almost fraudulent. They also say they believe in freedom in dealing with the technologies, but then they limit the Internet.

Furthermore, Aaron’s frustration was compounded by what he considered in himself only an “adequate” interest in computer technologies, though the ways he used technology in the past were beyond the scope of the resources his college provided him. Though he had a continued interest in the use of technology in teaching, he was seemingly limited by the resources of his situation, commenting, “I have been to several tech conferences, but I can never use what I learned since the schools are so backwards.” And though he did not consider himself a “technology specialist,” he taught “workshops on the use of technologies in the classroom” and he considered himself “very good at general technologies,” including the more advanced features of Microsoft *Word* and *PowerPoint*. Aaron remarked, “I would say that for writing technologies, I am fairly advanced compared to others around me. I am definitely the strongest in my department.” Everything else he struggled with. As he put it, “I suspect that I would do things differently if the technology was more available [but] I am constantly fighting with the tech people because of their lack of progress and maintenance.”
For Aaron, he very much understood the nature and importance of technology’s impact on the composition classroom, and he attempted to integrate these technologies into the pedagogy that was familiar to him. Unfortunately, the limits of his local situation prevented a part of what he envisioned for his classrooms. However, it might be argued that certain elements of his pedagogy, although facilitated a great deal by CMC, would not really benefit from more diverse technology integration. For example, he found his use of email and listservs to be beneficial for his students, but with the amount of access provided by the marketplace, he was less reliant on college IT infrastructure. Even though he stated that some students “become scared using these materials for the first time,” he described no other problem with relying on these external resources. Coming from the education background that he did, the technology that he recognized as important he had taken steps to implement. For example, although he considered himself well versed in writing and presentation technologies, his expertise in web design he called “minor.” Thus, he did not find a way to use external sources for teaching web design or integrating web design into his classes, probably because it played such a small part in his own experiences and his own expertise.

However, he did mention that he had problems with the physical space of the classroom limiting peer review. His process approach and pedagogy would find peer review vital for writing instruction, and certain technologies might have helped him find other ways of doing such review. Though a CMS like Blackboard could be utilized to such an end, it should also be noted that email, a technology Aaron already relied on, could be used as well. In fact, Strenski et al. found that “Compared to in-class peer review sessions—in which students typically either comment directly on the pages of another student’s draft or respond to an instructor-written checklist—email peer review
frequently elicits superior responses to student drafts” (193). Despite the technology heavy-handedness, infrastructure inadequacies, and support roadblocks that plagued Aaron’s situation, he already implemented CMC technology components into his class, and using email for peer review, although requiring a great deal of time and energy to set up, could still be feasible.

Aaron’s experiences as an undergraduate, then with classes on rhetoric and composition, and finally as an MFA, provided him with expectations and limits to what was possible in a writing class and the technology used there. As he continued to be aware of the changes in technology and its influence on writing practices and the social nature of learning and language use, he found himself prevented from exploring newer options in his writing classrooms by the lack of resources in his local situation. Instead, he had to rely on the normalized practice recorded in composition textbooks and his own experiences, themselves a product of lore, and especially, technology that existed outside the purview of his college. Despite the challenges of this situation, Aaron continued to struggle with those who made technology decisions in his institution, and he continued to find ways to synthesize his experiences and situation with an expectation and goal to bring about change.

Anne: Independent Learning and Computers as Play

Like Aaron, Anne was a fairly new teacher of composition, and like Aaron, she earned her MFA in creative writing. She defined her pedagogy as guiding “independent learning,” similar to Aaron, but she believed in constructing “games and activities” to help students write. For Anne, writing required different types of technologies, mainly interaction and, to some extent, presentation technologies, rather than communication technologies. This is not to say that Anne did not have an awareness and interest in
computer technologies. When she went to college in the mid-nineties, she did so with a computer that she built. She recalled with pride how she had to troubleshoot the Ethernet connection in her dorm room, and after her “tech guru friend” could not figure it out, she got it to work. Yet, Anne did not have a lot of external technology influences from her teachers in her university classes. She said that her professors used overheads and occasionally a film or digital video, but no other technology was utilized in the classroom. She recalled some frustration at the time when her professors would just reveal page after page of overhead notes to be copied, then shoveled them online. She felt they could have done something more useful in class if either presentation or distribution technology was used rather than both. However, as a teacher, an interesting pattern emerges. Despite her great interest in computer technology, Anne did not actively use computer technologies in her classroom. Anne would use the computer lab for a drafting or research day, but she resisted the use of the technology past this. As she put it, “computer for me is play...I love word processing programs but, at some point, you got to turn the thing off and leave.” Her own education experiences surfaced when she talked about the classrooms of the future in which DVDs and VCRs are available, and computers are at the periphery of classroom space. It is possible to see that she trusted in classroom technologies that she had seen in her own education – presentation technologies – yet her interest to have the computers available for “nitty gritty editing stuff” also reflect her own education and literacy experiences as individual acts.

Some of her earliest literacy memories involved her sister whom she used to play school with. “I learned my letters playing school...I loved phonics.” Anne remembered being given “special work in first and second grade, like learning to write sentences and
paragraphs early on,” and she was allowed to go back to the more advanced reading sections in the library before the other students her age. During the period in which Anne attended primary school, the phonic/whole-language debate had a significant impact on teaching (Lemann). The phonics system, often taught with drills and worksheets versus the whole-language system in which reading was an act of interpretation within the contexts of complete texts present a forced dichotomy. Proponents of either system would argue that a balanced approach is best, but in actual pedagogical materials, the technologies of instruction if you will, phonic teaching does rely on focused activities. Anne also remembered that she had “a lot of special reading groups and special writing stuff” because of her early interests and attention. Of her entire time as a student, Anne recalls, “I was very reliable, very dependable...both my sister and I were raised in a background of having a lot of different interests, and getting as many A’s as possible.” Both GenXers, Anne contrasts with Aaron in two very important ways. For Aaron, his earliest literacy memories were representative of whole language approaches and creative work, though he was punished for taking it too far. Anne recalled more focused and activity driven work. Yet, interestingly enough, Anne was “reliable” and “dependable,” whereas Aaron was rebellious and resistant, even as they both were successful in their literacy educations.

Anne began her undergraduate education when the dot-com bubble was at its apex, when Kairos, then sub-headed A Journal for Teachers of Writing in Webbed Environments, saw its first publication, and when the Webby Awards began celebrating the best designs on the Internet. Anne attended a prestigious Midwest university, earning a BA in 2001. Her slightly extended undergraduate education she attributed to “having a lot of options” and it taking a long time to figure out what she wanted to do.
Her writing classes were honors level. The materials the teachers relied on were not the usual trappings of composition, e.g. the rhetorics, readers, and handbooks, but those of “fiction and autobiography…novels and things like that.” She remembered that she wrote essays for all of her classes, as that was part of a university initiative. “I wrote a lot of papers…I picked classes that were challenging that way on purpose.” Two noteworthy vectors appear in this context. At the time Anne was in college, certain changes in composition approaches had established themselves, one seemingly resisted by her undergraduate institution, and one fully adopted. On one hand, the use of “novels and things like that,” as objects to the teaching of writing has a storied past, leading back to the turn of the last century and the abandonment of composition and rhetoric in favor of the esteem of literary studies. Connors, Berlin, Crowley and Brereton each have constructed different tales for how and why literature gained such esteem over rhetorical study. However, it is most often the case that larger cultural changes have placed different significance on the institutional and social roles that English, as a subject, has played in the university. In relation to Anne’s experience, there are little in reliable ways, save conducting interviews with each of her instructors, and conducting interviews with each of their instructors, to fully understand how Anne’s instructors approached the teaching of English and thus partly shaped Anne as a teacher. Providing some context, however, Susan Miller’s appendix study found that literature holds a greater departmental status, especially by older faculty (234-236). Such a status is given some weight through familiarity. Robert Connors points out that as most teachers had degrees in literature, and thus were more familiar with literary analysis as a mode of literacy education, it was natural for them to see the teaching of writing through this lens (324-5). Through such association, the instructors at the
esteemed university that Anne attended, being in an English department comprised of mainly professors trained in literature, would then follow such a literature-focused pedagogy.

The other vector that appears in the brief synopsis of Anne’s undergraduate education is what appears to have the qualities of a writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) program. She recalled doing a lot of writing while attending college, and she said it was a “component” of all her classes. In fact, WAC programs, as David Russell argues, have a history going back to the early part of the last century (55). However, the WAC movement as Russell elaborates on in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines 1870-1990: A Curricular History*, has a long cycle of evolution, very much tied to social and economic factors, but also to perceived “traditions” and university’s role in a post-industrial culture. To be sure, traditions within certain disciplines have precluded writing as a mode of teaching and learning, and the constant struggle has often been to what degree the mechanics of writing should be judged in disciplines outside of English. In 1990, right before Anne entered college, and amid another round of revisions of WAC, Russell wrote, “In the university today, however, there are some signs that the structural resistance to cross-curricular writing instruction is weakening. In many institutions there is a genuine effort to transform faculty attitudes toward writing instruction—and toward undergraduate instruction in general” (67). Anne’s university experience very much reflects this WAC program evolution and promise of the 1990s, considering writing as a preferred mode of learning and assessment across the university. And yet, what is an English department’s role in such a program but to teach students what the professors who comprise it know (i.e. Literature) through written analysis. Thus, each vector intersects the other.
Throughout the interview, Anne made references to a bio-ethics class that she was an undergraduate writing TA for, an experience that she classified as teaching when asked how long she had taught writing at the college level. Anne remembered an essay that the professor handed to his students about writing essays. “It was basically a short essay that explained that it’s okay to copy from the masters, look at their form and structure and figure out what they do, and then incorporate that into what you need to do.” Such a reference to belletristic instruction, in which writing was about “eloquence, style and taste” (Connors 223) that also was arguably a part of Anne’s literature-based writing courses, is notable. In the history of composition, belletrism, much like the modes that followed it as a significant means of instruction, precludes alternative ways or individual ways of knowing and communicating. After all, the so-called “masters” which writers are to copy or imitate are often a group composed of limited social and cultural factors. More politically speaking, white, male, upper to middle class writers are those who defined what stood as good writing, and who have codified the approved means by which we should communicate, and more completely, how we should be educated. Crowley and others have argued that the much earlier shift in the nineteenth century from rhetoric as a means of civic education into the individual fulfillment through the “cultivation of an educated taste” (34) led to the eventual displacement of rhetoric, and its concomitant civic role in the training of doctors, lawyers, and clergy, as a means of study. This movement, in turn, led to a tendency in writing teachers to teach “form rather than content” according to an argument Frank Aydelotte made in 1917 (Brereton 310). Anne’s own history is reflective, though not determined by these earlier movements and more contemporary critiques. The fact of the matter is that much cultural capital still resides in the traditions of writing instruction. It is too much to
expect any teacher, especially a new teacher, to transform from being a “dependable” and “reliable” student, who succeeded in her education by the rules, exclusionary as they arguably are, into one who would challenge these rules. As Gary Olsen laments, “the Western, rationalist tradition of assertion and support is so entrenched in our epistemology and ways of understanding what ‘good’ writing and ‘thinking’ are that this tradition, along with its concomitant assumptions, defies even our most concerted efforts to subvert it” (9). Despite the potentially oppressive nature of her education, Anne excelled.

Anne, as a teacher, both confirmed and contrasted her experiences as a student. By her own definition, Anne’s pedagogy was focused on “independent learning.” She said:

I just so want them to have that experience that I had as a university student which was discovering some of these concepts on my own...I think so many students want to sit there and listen to you lecture...and so many of them are OK with that...but, they have to take away from that...and this is what I struggle with—they have to take away from that, yes, you just learned something, but now you have to figure out how you’re going to apply that...I can’t do that for you.

Anne was marked by her own success as a student. As a result, it is this very independence that she believed would lead to the success of her students as well. She revealed how she sought to assist in her students all becoming successful, independent writers. An active teacher, who assembled much scaffolding and activities so that her students could pass a program portfolio exit phenomenon, Anne had her students’ interests at heart. When asked about theory or professional influences, she stated, “I
like to have my finger on the nerve of what is happening, and if I’m paying too much
attention to theory, I’m not listening to my students.” For Anne, her students and their
success was the most important thing, and even if that success was judged as short-
sighted as successfully completing the class, this should be a worthy goal. Where the
story becomes complex was in the way Anne classified her own teaching. “You have to
find your own system otherwise you are doing what someone else does in the classroom
not your own thing.” She did pick up ideas, but she wanted her teaching to reflect fully
“her own style.” Yet, it was her own style, an independent approach to learning coupled
with activities to achieve assessment objectives that she prompted in her own students.
In other words, she wanted her students to be independent learners, but in her teaching
she used materials and activities as heuristics to those ends. Thus, independent
learning by Anne’s standards relied on technology in the form of handouts, textbooks,
and activities because those materials were what allowed her to succeed.

Computer technologies, on the other hand, represented some interesting contrasts for Anne. She stated:

I’m very computer-oriented. That’s why word processing makes sense to me. I understand word processing and I like having the class meet in the computer lab, but I’m just not the person who is going to incorporate that into the classroom because I can’t get enough done of what I want to do other than that, at the same time. I can’t balance those two things together.

Her own experiences with technology were on an individual level, her own work and own curiosity with the technology. As a student, she saw technologies that were more traditional, even as she was herself a part of the digital generation, steeped as it were in
computer technologies. When asked about her literacy with these newer technologies, she returned to her pedagogy:

I know how to use all the programs, and I can function adequately with any sort of computer information you put in front of me, but I’m a person who likes to wander around the classroom and scribble things on the board. That’s who I am. I get excited, and I have to do this, and run around, and scribble some more, and say, “yes, yes, that’s it,” and scribble some more, scribble, scribble, so in terms of my energy, the computer is, clunk, straight down to the bottom. I can’t get energetic about it. Not so much a computer whiz in the classroom.

One possible explanation is that Anne’s expectations for computer use in the classroom were not very high because she herself did not see these technologies used in her college education. Another explanation could be that her own expertise or literacy with computer technologies made her understand and expect more of what the technologies were capable of, and that she did not see how this connected with her teaching. One comment to draw on here has to do with her interests and education in creative writing. Anne believed herself to be a better argumentative writing teacher than creative writing teacher because she was more focused. Of note here, however, was a comment she made: “I think it is more difficult to teach [creative writing] when you are really super involved in that field.” Although this could be said of any field, as more expertise and training opens up cracks to critique that would have otherwise remained hidden, it is relevant in her consideration of classroom technology use because, as somebody with moderate computer literacy, she was more likely able to see the possibilities more than somebody who is only slightly computer literate. And maybe, one final though related
explanation for her resistance to computer technology integration in her composition classroom could be compared directly to Aaron’s views of technology in education; she saw computer technologies in a complicated state in higher education, requiring more work and effort to integrate into her pedagogy than she was willing to give. Despite the computer for Anne being “play,” she saw neither the integration of the types of games and activities native to the technology as relevant, nor how her particular pedagogy was relevant to full-scale integration of such technologies into her classroom. To return to the beginning, this connection of seeing the computer as an individual or singular tool with that of a pedagogy centered on independent learning makes a significant amount of sense if we consider the influence of her educational experiences in the contexts so described.

Anne’s own critique of technology is both tied to her experiences as an undergraduate and to her personal experience with computers. Although she seemed frustrated when her own professors used presentation technologies when they could have used distribution technologies, Anne was distrustful of a future in which distribution technologies held sway. “I fear this movement toward all books and materials on computers, and just have students carry around computers all the time, and just put them on their desks...I really fear the day we are all going to be on computers, because I just don’t see that as being enjoyable for a lot of folks.” Echoing both concerns, of presentation and distribution technology, Anne suggested that, “we need to continue working on using a variety of materials in the classroom, and not just doing one thing, not just having the technology and nothing else.” The primary crux of her argument was as follows:
We’re going to have new technology and we have old technology and I think if we are going to continue to teach students how to function in the college world as well as teaching them how to write, we need to respect that there’s a whole spectrum of things available for them to use, and that they need to know how to use all of them.

Given her interest and literacy with computer technologies, it seems apparent that she would have a complex understanding of how and when such technologies were appropriate. What was unusual in her situation was how she responded to technology’s ubiquity into the university setting – her critique was to both emphasize that it was only one way of teaching the creative work of writing and researching, but that also it was her own means of individual creativity. To put a finer point on it, nowhere in her interview did she ever suggest that computer technologies could be used in ways supportive of her belief in the humanities as “talking and thinking”; the computer was a tool for individual work and only at later stages of the writing process. Despite her having more experience with the technologies than some of her students, Anne considered technology in limited, though critical ways in her classrooms.

Analysis

Aaron and Anne represent a younger generation of composition teachers in my particular study. Although I would not suggest that their experiences could be generalized due to the small amount of data I collected and their differing backgrounds, I do want to emphasize a difference between these two instructors and a larger social milieu, often constructed by later generations, that expects those of Aaron and Anne’s generation to have overly positive expectations about contemporary technologies. Hawisher and Selfe’s representatives of Generation X confirmed these expectations. By
contrast, Aaron and Anne have complex relationships with technology, and counter the tech savvy teacher whose ideal situation is a computerized classroom. Through research serendipity, Aaron and Anne also represent the prevalence of first-year composition instructors with MFAs, even as their pedagogies counter the expectations often attributed to their background. Some vestige of their creative writing background could be seen in how they described their classrooms and experience, but their impetus for pedagogy relied more on their own education rather than scholarship or their limited teaching experience. Finally, their technology use was tied to their pedagogies and local situations in sometimes contradictory ways. They both have complicated visions of technology’s role in the composition classroom.

Impetus for Pedagogy

Creative writing’s disciplinary status and the history of the MFA degree in writing are a part of a larger, often ignored part of the teaching of first-year composition. To consider the origins or impetus of the pedagogies of two such MFA graduates is to consider the more complicated role of creative writing in the English department and the disciplinary status of a Master’s degree, terminal or not in the current landscape of composition. To be clear, my analysis is focused on how technologies are considered and used in the composition classroom; however, it is important to consider trends in the teaching of first-year composition to understand part of what makes Aaron and Anne, and their respective pedagogies, significant representatives of a larger population, and, thus, how those in their position might consider technology’s role.

Unfortunately, few studies even acknowledge the prevalence of creative writing MFAs teaching first-year composition. Although the first MFA for creative writing was offered at the University of Iowa in 1936 (“About the Workshop”), creative writing has
often been a part of the writing classroom (Berlin Writing Instruction 79). Katherine Adams argues that creative writing in the university has its roots in the teaching of writing by a professional writer as opposed to a scholar, which later developed into a turf-war of sorts between those scholars who taught literature and the writers who taught writing. As D.G. Meyers puts it, creative writing as a professional practice “has acted with hostility toward two different conceptions of literature and writing, which for convenience might be labeled the scholarly and the socially practical” (8): Creative writing as a field of study both distrusts theory and supports writing for writing’s sake. At issue is that MFA programs including that of the University of Iowa’s, usually have a mission that involves preparing graduates to teach creative writing courses, with little mention of the first-year composition they will end up most likely teaching. I use “most likely” because there is little statistical or demonstrative data as to the actual number of creative writing and MFA graduates who are teaching first-year composition. Individual universities sometimes survey their MFA graduates, and, as Daniel Grant reported in 1999 about such a survey conducted by Columbia University, they have found “a high percentage of real-estate brokers, social workers, employees of insurance companies and advertising agencies, school guidance counselors, proofreaders and college-level freshman composition teachers” with MFAs in creative writing. More inclusive studies often limit or clump classifications of such degree holders; for example in Helon Howell Raines’ study “Is There a Writing Program in this College? Two Hundred and Thirty-Six Two-Year Schools Respond,” she reported that of “142 responses representing 2,025 faculty...52% have an MFA, two Masters, or a Masters plus at least 15 hours” (156). Even Susan Miller, though she does refer to creative writing classrooms in her survey of college catalogs and course offerings (66-76), neglects a creative writing faculty
distinction in her study recorded in *Textual Carnivals* of perceived status within English departments. Additionally, although edited collections by Joseph Moxley, and Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom have looked at history and current trends in creative writing pedagogy, neither spends words enough on the routine practice of MFAs teaching first-year composition and the pedagogies they employ.

Of additional concern is the status of the MFA teaching composition, whether as lecturer or professor. Those who teach composition have historically been described as “children, serfs, prisoners, and slaves” (Crowley 127), and the MFA that teaches composition is bound by these same constraints. Though the MFA is considered a terminal degree, it has less comparable value to other terminal degrees when placed against the backdrop of English studies. For one, academic capital associated with an MFA degree is based on publication of creative works, mainly outside the usual chapbooks. For a freshly minted MFA, part-time, or as in the case of Anne, full-time composition labor is often easy to obtain due to roll-over graduate teaching assistant positions in MFA programs or the sparseness of teachers with PhDs in composition willing to take low-pay, overworked positions at universities or community colleges. These positions are appealing, even if, as in the case of Anne and Aaron, the workload is quite great, because they provide a type of patronage (Meyers 7) to the effort of earning a terminal degree while the author works on his or her creative works. Unfortunately, the overworked aspect creates an absurdity for the instructor. To publish creative works, the MFA requires time and energy to work. Unfortunately, teaching writing classes is very time intensive in its own right, each course requiring over 230 time-on-course work hours for the semester, or, subtracting overlapping prep-time, 633 time-on-course work hours if the instructor is (un)lucky enough to get three courses (Haswell
“Writing Teacher Workload”). What time and energy is left to one’s own work with such a workload?

The second issue compounds the first. The MFA might take what he or she may think is a temporary job teaching composition as a way to “get his or her foot in the door” and earn some experience to become more marketable while waiting for the scarce tenure-track or full-time position in creative writing. In 2004, MLA recorded only a little over 200 Index-Term calls (out of 3,723 total terms in 1,362 jobs) for positions involving the teaching of creative writing (MLA “Report”). As jobs in composition are more plentiful given their “ad hoc status” (Miller 145) as able to respond to fluctuations in constantly increasing enrollments, the ephemeral nature of both the teacher’s assumption of the role and the department’s treatment of those filling the roles leaves the MFA once again in another absurd situation. Thus, further education or training in composition, including technology workshops or conferences, is most likely not a common assumption to those in these positions because it is all temporary to them – to them, it would be like asking a McDonald’s cook to consider attending the Culinary Institute of America. If the McDonald’s analogy seems harsh, consider that so many instructors in such positions are paid between $1,700 and $3,000 a course (Peary; Krause) – in some cases, a little bit over minimum wage given the workload described earlier. The temporary position and instructor further impacts the student as well. Miller writes that such attitudes “redefined a new quantity of composition students as only tentatively ‘accepted,’ whatever their admission status” (147) because they were being taught by a temporary teacher in a temporary program.

Whether it is the percentage of MFAs who teach composition, the pedagogy they practice, or the working conditions of those in the position, future research questions
abound in this area. Despite the little data as to the full extent of the MFA in composition situation, enough suggests a noteworthy percentage of such teachers exist, and my study, although not intended to single out MFAs who teach composition, found two such examples. Such a result is important here because of stated and unstated assumptions about how creative writing teachers approach the teaching of composition and the potential of technology to facilitate that approach. In a 1999 Interchange in *CCC*, Ted Lardner, George Kalamaros, Tim Meyers, and Mary Ann Cain addressed the pedagogical connections and differences that exist in creative writing and composition classrooms. Though none of the articles offers any in-depth study of classroom practice, each does present what can only be considered informed assumptions.

In light of what Aaron and Anne revealed in the current study, I would like to complicate these assumptions. For one, Ladner argues that creative writing teachers often teach in a way that “lacks a social perspective on composing” (73). Aaron stands in stark contrast to this. Aaron’s principal argument for introducing what technology he does in the classroom was to emphasize writing as a “social act,” that composing is a collaborative and socially motivated process. Anne, however, spoke little of the collaborative and social nature of texts and technologies, and neglected to describe any collaborative assignments or activities. Anne also made references that disagreed with Aaron’s assessment that technology facilitates the social nature of learning and communicating, arguing that humanities was “talking and thinking,” and that she feared a day when we would always be connected to technology. It is not so simple to state that Anne is not conscious of the social nature of composing just because her critique of technology was that it negatively impacts social interaction.
Another assumption about creative writing teachers is the role of the teacher and the subject to be taught in such a role. Ladner writes that teachers trained in creative writing “foreground their role as the keepers of the castle rather than the openers of the castle gates” (74). As composition teachers have often adopted the latter mission, it seems problematic to have creative writing graduates in such a role. George Kalamaros remarks that composition is often seen in “functionalist” terms, preparing future academic writers whereas “creative writing” is seen as somehow different (78). Though he argues, citing Berlin, that creative writing teachers should adopt a social-epistemic rhetoric (80), the assumption he outlines is that this would be a change from how creative writing teachers usually approach the teaching of writing. Furthermore, both Mary Ann Cain and Tim Mayers cite Ron McFarland’s *College English* article that argues of all the qualities of a writer, “only craft can be taught” (84). Both Cain and Meyers attempt to counter this assumption, but they still cast a shadow with their critique of a style and approach to teaching very different than that cast by composition. The tales of Aaron and Anne, once again, resemble a complex parallel. On one hand, Aaron held a significant distrust of the functionalist role of composition when he said, “To have a set assignment that requires students to fill in the blanks, does not teach writing at all. So, students have to start with nothing and come up with something.” Though he very much was operating as an “opener of the gates” by encouraging diverse writing not bound to limited situations, he also seems to deny the importance of tools and heuristics in how we learn. In other words, even though Aaron might have assumed his open approach was beneficial by breaking limits set by heuristics, it also assumed that students already have a corpus of individual heuristics or strategies to draw on. Seeing as Aaron identified closely his teaching with the equalizing social and individual
responsibilities of change, it seems confusing to consider his approach as implicitly privileging those students who have had more experience with literacies that can institute such change.

In his local situation, Aaron was given more leeway as to what he taught and how he assessed his students, so his role as teacher and the subjects he addressed more closely reflected a personal pedagogy. His open assignments and lack of interest in any sort of “fill in the blanks” activities could be reflective of his own creative writing education. Robert Scholes in *The Rise and Fall of English* argues, in fact, that creative writing as a discipline is committed to a conservative agenda mired in the avant-garde movements (161) that those in positions to hire and implement curriculum were educated under. Aaron might not see worth in the genres or the functionalist writing that composition classes usually employ because he was taught to be distrustful of such genre pigeonholing. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is a tricky claim to make, if only because narrative inquiry, although a rich source of information, can never fully uncover the often conflicting and complex motivations for pedagogy. In contrast, Anne had to abide by more limited assessment criteria, and thus, had a more limited approach to the practice in her classroom. Both Aaron and Anne had creative writing educations, but Anne, a teacher in a more restrictive curriculum, had to submit to the limits of that curriculum. Yet, she freely admitted that she was “more focused” when she taught composition, suggesting that her own creative writing education, much like Aaron’s, encouraged a more open-ended approach.

The impetus for pedagogy in the cases of Aaron and Anne has been assumed because of their educational pedigree to be of one sort, when in fact, each counters some of these expectations. Though both graduated with MFAs in creative writing, neither
mentioned issues of pedagogy or creative writing epistemologies when asked about their own writing education. In fact, it is quite interesting that two recent MFA graduates would recall more of their undergraduate writing experience including their literature or general education classes than the writing or the teaching of writing that they were immersed in as graduate students. As students, both Aaron and Anne internalized their future pedagogies. Aaron’s earliest school and literacy memories were points of freewriting and open opportunities to challenge and write against expectations. As a teacher, he encouraged the same from his students, and he actively resisted heuristics or “formulas.” In similar fashion though contrasting experience, Anne, who “loved phonics” and remembered the heuristics of her education, introduced focused activities to her students. Both recalled in their undergraduate educations writing about a lot of fiction, but neither said much as to how they were actually taught to write about the topic. In Anne’s case, she said that she was given many different materials and that she had to figure out for herself how to connect them. Because of the “contextual dependency of literacy” (Kucer 325), Anne sought connections closest to the contexts of her experience in writing about these varied readings, and constructed connections through embedded synthesis. Aaron, who could not remember the specific assignments, did remember that he had textbooks, but also followed this memory up with a comment about the superfluity of ten books that he was assigned in one class. However, Aaron remembered that his composition teacher was “using process.” The idea of process made a significant impact on Aaron, and he kept returning his attention to the importance of process in his own pedagogy. It seems apparent from both experiences, that the contextual dependency of literacy could very much be extrapolated from the “independent” connections that each made as students to their future pedagogy. At this
stage in their careers, both relied heavily on their student experiences because they were closest to them. As teachers, Aaron and Anne were both fairly new to the profession. Their limited experience would understandably leave them more trusting of their more immediate education as students. Though Aaron stated that his pedagogy was mostly a result of “research...textbooks, and experience,” his assignments and approach was very much aligned with his experiences as a student and not from any experience he shared or might have recognized from being a teacher.

Although Aaron and Anne described pedagogies reflective of current conversations in composition, it is difficult to say from the interviews to what extent and when theory and scholarship override their student experiences. And each had his and her own opinion as to theory’s importance in the work of the classroom. Aaron said that research and “modern theory” played significant importance in his pedagogy. His use of portfolios for assessment and to emphasize process, online discussions and listervs, and multiple peer review all established Aaron’s classroom as reflective of some composition theory. However, missing from Aaron’s report of his classroom practice are issues of disciplinary writing as theorized by past and current WAC scholarship, connections with civic and community literacy, and digital portfolios, all topics that Doug Hesse covered in his 2005 CCCC Chair’s Address, “Who Owns Writing?” (335). There are many other “modern theories” of writing theory that might be addressed here as well. The data presented does counter a bit of Aaron’s perception of what he was trying to do in the classroom. However, his pedagogy did reflect a sensibility to composition theory, just not the most current theory. Now, I would never argue that every composition classroom should be a theory cornucopia, chockablock with every fresh idea harvested.
that month, but it was interesting that Aaron’s perception was that his pedagogy was informed by modern theory.

On the other hand, Anne freely counters the impact of current composition theory in her classroom. “I’m really bad about reading professional rhetoric journals and stuff like that,” Anne said. Her approach was to listen to her students first, to what they needed before turning to theory. Interestingly enough, Anne also used portfolios in her classroom, had an established grading criteria and writing objectives, but also taught first-year composition connected to learning communities within the university, enabling a WAC component missing from Aaron’s classes. And yet, these elements of current theory were a result of the more structured program under which she taught. This is not to say that Anne was a complete product of her writing program; after all, she served on the Learning Outcomes committee and helped formulate the program criteria for its outcome-based assessment. To conclude, Anne classified her teaching as “independent” and “empathic” whereas Aaron considered his teaching as driven by research and experience. Such a conclusion presents both a potentially gendered response to how each classifies him or herself as a teacher and a potential disconnect with the actual practice each enacted in the classroom. In the end, it further supports Wendy Bishop’s argument that new teachers present with an unfamiliar role in an old situation enact the role from their perceptions of what is expected by that role.

In either case, Aaron and Anne demonstrate a great deal of individual agency vis-à-vis their local situations. Aaron and Anne both resisted their local situations in order to assert their own pedagogies. For Aaron, the lack of support for certain technologies and the disregard for his expertise in these technologies prevented him from using college resources toward his goals. Instead, he had to use external resources, not an
uncommon occurrence, but one that is highly reliant on access. For Anne, although provided with extensive resources in the form of computer labs and a wireless classroom, she did not see how these technologies really benefited her pedagogy. In fact, the impetus for her pedagogy and its integration with technology was very much tied to her individual belief that the computer was good for play and “the nitty gritty of editing,” but not for any other operation in the classroom. Maybe under such an analysis, she might have seen that play, which could very much be part of her pedagogy, might somehow be facilitated by the computer. Yet, never having had an experience in her own education that allowed her to see computers in this pedagogical role, there was little to model such use on.

It is readily apparent from these two, fairly new teachers, that their impetus for pedagogy came primarily from their own educations, and modeling of their own experience in that education, as well as their own desires to enact what they believed to be good teaching from their own, individual experiences with literacy and teaching. There is little here to suggest that local situations really prevent a teacher from enacting the type of pedagogy that he or she wants. In fact, there is significant resistance present in the lengths each teacher was willing to go to construct his or her classroom space and pedagogy. This is a very important finding considering the warrant outlined in Chapter One as to the importance of context in determining what and how technologies are used in the composition classroom. As I stated, individual agency is a driving factor in technology use in the composition classroom (Cuban 167). This confirmation and others seems to challenge the common argument that “institutional settings exert strong influences not only on how instructors use technology in the classroom but also on how they envision the relationship between teaching and technology” (Eldred and Toner 35).
Aaron and Anne, despite having very different local situations, enacted pedagogies based on their own experiences rather than those constructed by their situations. It could be argued that each had in fact very serious local limits to the pedagogy they enact. Aaron, in a community college and given very few resources and students with differing goals, could only do so much. Similarly, Anne, in a university with an elaborate portfolio process and limits to the curriculum, could also only do so much. However, each teacher was active nonetheless. Aaron resisted the lack of resources and found ways to upset the limits placed on his pedagogy. Anne resisted the pedagogy by serving on the learning outcomes committee, a committee responsible for supporting and revising the curriculum under which she taught.

Technology Use

Much like the impetus for pedagogy, each informant’s use of technology was influenced primarily by his or her own educational experience and secondarily by his or her own agency. Aaron relied on presentation and communication technologies whereas Anne relied on presentative technologies and to some extent on creation technologies. Neither reported considering interactive technologies as of much use in the composition classroom, and, although each was literate with the computer as a creative technology, neither was able to bring that fully into his or her teaching.

Aaron used presentation and communication technologies. Aaron used “smart classrooms,” even though they were “not maintained properly and only work half the time.” He also used PowerPoint when he could get a projector. He also said that he used DVDs and VCRs. In each of these uses, presentation technologies, in which the technology is used to display information, were used as supplement. In other words, as stated in Chapter One, presentation technologies rely on information already created to
be observed by mass audiences for analysis. The limits of presentation technologies in Aaron’s uses are twofold. For one, they reinforce an image of the teacher as “sage on the stage,” though it could be more aptly called “scholar on the screen.” Based on Aaron’s own account of his teaching, in that he believed he was a guide to his students and that he detested uses of formula and stringent criteria, such an evaluation may seem against his best efforts. However, such technology used by a teacher can reinforce that the message for analysis, or the conveyer of information, is a fixed text that cannot be interacted with. In fairness to Aaron, close analysis of anybody’s teaching, including our own, will sometimes reveal that engagement with activities that may not plumb with our beliefs due to the implicit and often conflicting educations we have received.

The second limit to Aaron’s use of presentation technologies is that they exclude the students from considering these technologies in different ways. Presentation technologies not tied to creation technologies exclude from the students the uses of those technologies as potential mediums and materials for meaning making. Furthermore, pure presentation technologies can limit the options of revision open to the students when they consider the information displayed, in a sense, preventing the student from truly analyzing the text (i.e. what is displayed). If students do not see the possibilities or the means of using these technologies in their own work, they might never gain the tools to consider the uses of these technologies in ways different than they were presented to them. The best analogy would be that such use is tantamount to teaching students how to read, but denying them the materials and means to write. If we are to seriously consider the call from the New London Group that “literacy pedagogy must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (9), then students must learn how to interact and create with
these texts. Relying on past practice with these technologies reinforces past pedagogies that have long since been shown to fall short of many goals in literacy education.

Just as Aaron remembered “projectors” and TVs and VCRs as the primary technology in his own education, his use of these technologies was reinforced by this experience. When Aaron was in school, the uses of presentation technologies reaffirmed traditional teacher roles, and thus served as a one-way conduit of information; thus, he considered first the use of these same technologies in this way. Cuban’s analysis of these presentation technologies found that although some teachers discovered that film and television “motivated” students, a number of teachers used “audio-visual equipment to give themselves a tiny break” (138). Of course, without observing the specific uses of presentation technologies, and relying on his telling of his uses of these technologies alone, it is difficult to make a larger argument or suggestion here. However, in this case, technology use is shown to bear a significant relationship to past experiences and contexts with that technology, despite whatever theory or change in social milieu might hold.

Aaron’s uses of communication technologies, on the other hand, was very much in contrast to his experiences as a student. Such a contrast does not discount the previous argument that we are driven to use certain technologies as a result of our past experience with those technologies. In fact, it confirms it. As a student, Aaron did not remember seeing the use of communication technologies, especially CMC, for his classes, so he had no model but his own personal use from which to consider those technologies in his classroom. In his teaching, Aaron used email and listservs in most of his classes, and found that they were “really effective.” Using communication technology allowed his students a greater connection with each other and with him, and
allowed him to carry the class outside the confines of the physical space. In fact, and very much aligned with his process pedagogy, the use of CMC in his classroom supported the type of one-to-one interaction that he found to be important in literacy education. The process approach, especially in the form that Aaron’s teachers were influenced by, was “anti-establishment [and] antiauthoritarian” (Tobin 4). For Aaron, process was about disrupting the space, about abolishing the institutional classroom. CMC provided him with opportunities he had not previously seen, and gave him a punk rock sensibility in unmaking the traditions that he disagreed with. Aaron wanted students to connect with each other, to write for themselves and for him in ways outside the sanction of the college. However, as Sirc laments, composition, and the classroom still have the vestiges of the “establishment” no matter what we do (246). After all, students want to belong. They want to adopt the academic discourse and participate in the conversation because they see that discourse as means toward an end – graduation, job, success. Aaron’s use of email and listserv was outside the official purview of the college, maintaining his disruptive approach to certain traditions of education. However, the approach also sought to address student needs and goals by leaning toward giving the students the classroom they expected and providing them with valuable experiences with the communicative technologies as associated with writing and literacy.

Anne’s various uses of technology reflect her personal agency and educational experiences as well. Though she used presentation technologies, she did so in different ways than her past teachers did. She also used creation technologies, but she used them in very limited ways. Anne stated specifically that she was motivated to use the materials and technologies that she used based on her “experiences as a university
student.” From this perspective, it is easy to see some reasons why she integrated the technologies that she did in her class.

Anne recalled, as an undergraduate, professors who used video and slides, as well as “information and things on the computer.” She also felt that this use of technology was “easier to incorporate into the sciences.” Here, she recognized the use of presentation technologies as one-sided in the display of information to students. As her own pedagogy was creation- and communication-based, she saw few options for using these technologies. However, she said, “I’m a person who likes to wander around the classroom and scribble things on the board.” She liked the whiteboard and the overhead. Although she still used presentation technologies, she used them as a means of creation. Because the students could respond and add to the information presented, these technologies were very much collaborative and in some instances communicative in nature. They also allowed Anne the opportunities to better connect with her students and allowed her to demonstrate heuristics to help guide her students. Presentation technologies used as communicative or creative technologies create a different classroom space than that of Aaron’s. Where Aaron used CMC for communicative and creative goals, relying on presentation technologies in their intended form, Anne used the class time to guide and collaboratively construct options for current and future writing.

Additionally, when Anne considered future or ideal learning spaces, she spent some time talking about the need for DVD and VCRs, but not for the teacher’s use. In fact, she said, “I like to have access [to audio/visual] stuff when students do presentations.” She also described how these classrooms should give students access to computers with DVDs and camcorders. Here, presentation technologies are given the
options for use by the student, in a fashion different than how Aaron described his use. Yet, Anne’s perception of creative technologies was limited in an important way. She described PowerPoint as ideal for presentations, the importance of handout activities and guides to the writing the students were doing, and computers on the periphery for editing work. In each of these cases, and even more if we consider how she considered other audio/visual components, the use of technology was in fixed ways, to innovate or change rather than invent. Anne’s perspective could be tied to the program goals that gave her “focus” in the teaching of writing, something she shared that she did not have when she taught creative writing. Although I have referred to the more fixed curriculum under which Anne taught as playing a role in her pedagogy, there was in fact much variation in an approach to such a curriculum. However, when the added technology layer is coupled with these approaches, then fewer options can seem apparent. These limits could also have been a product of her expertise with computers and a complex understanding of what is possible with more open technologies or at least in allowing students to consider more open uses of those technologies.

Attitudes toward Technology

As discussed in the previous chapters, teachers are often classified in how they approach technology in the higher education classroom. The warrant I outlined in Chapter One argued that considering these approaches as one of three categories can exclude work with technology that compositionists do, especially as we consider the criteria for critical technology use often described by the computers and writing community. From my study, it is apparent that there is another way to read this antagonist view of technology if we consider attitudes toward the technology in addition to the actual experience with that technology, and how external factors can influence
how we read these attitudes. It is too simple to say that a professor might have a negative view toward technology. In fact, attitudes about technology are multilayered and create a complex means to read these histories.

From the earliest critiques of how teachers considered computer technologies in higher education, there has been an antagonist thread. It is often the case that those who consider the issue often label groups as for or against the influx of technology in the classroom, with a smaller percentage classified as “critical” (Selfe) or “complex” (Gruber) in their consideration of this technology. Anne and Aaron create interesting alternatives to this consideration that in fact challenges these labels even as they partly reinforce them. Aaron and Anne are both younger, newer teachers of composition, and both have much experience with technologies. But, as evident from the quotations that began this chapter, each understands the role of technology in higher education in ways not really accounted for by these past labels. As Duffelmeyer found in her study of TAs and computer use, because computer technologies are unfamiliar to a number of new teachers, their consideration of using those technologies in the classroom is often negative. For Aaron and Anne, however, the computer was much more familiar to their experiences with literacy, and it was their past and current situations that limited their consideration of these technologies in the classroom.

Anne described a great deal of expertise with computers, mostly at the acquisition level (Gee 146). “I didn’t really have any technology classes...I didn’t need them because I was doing a whole bunch of stuff on my computer anyway.” But for Anne, computer was “play.” Spending ten hours a day on instant messenger, editing, and working on her own writing and as editor for a journal, Anne had a very positive experience with her own technology use. However, Anne was in a situation to see
limited possibilities for the computer in her classroom, and she freely admitted that her “block” from seeing technology use in the classroom was partly a result of how she saw technology used (or not used) when she was an undergraduate. Furthermore, she saw the role of the humanities classroom as “talking and thinking” and that the computer “doesn’t always help with that.” Her experience with computer technology in the classroom appears negative. Here, the limits of the previous general negative-positive-complex classification becomes tricky. How would one classify Anne’s attitude toward technology in the classroom? Consider her attitude toward technology as influenced by a number of factors. Anne’s attitude toward computer technology in the classroom was negative because this technology prevented her from the models of teaching that she was comfortable with. She saw the whiteboard and handout heuristics as positive technologies as they supported her expectations of teaching. However, she had positive attitudes toward computer technology at an individual level, because that was the technology that she saw as a part of her success and supportive of her mode of learning. Thus, it is too simple to argue that she has a negative attitude and resistance to technology, easily overcome by a workshop, incentive, or extensive resource allocation. Anne could be considered, in fact, a critical non-user of technology.

Aaron described himself as advanced in a number of computer technologies, and he considered himself “the strongest in his department” with this technology, even though his own assessment was that he was “adequate.” Because he imagined more complex activities facilitated by computer technologies, he considered his expertise at a lower level than that of others. His own block in implementing these activities was in the resources allocated toward technology in his local situation that influenced him to have a negative attitude toward the technology at that level. It was not that he saw
computer technology as negative toward his students, because he did integrate CMC and presentation technologies into his pedagogy. Instead, it was the fact that he saw computer lab spaces and a CMS in negative ways due to the lack of support and commitment that his college provided. He went to “several tech conferences” and gave workshops for fellow faculty on technology use, but he saw both activities in negative ways because there was no real follow-through. But is Aaron the Sven Birkerts figure, railing against the death of the page? Not in the slightest.

Considering the contributing factors to these attitudes allow one to better understand the critical and not so critical uses of those technologies. Both Aaron and Anne are what might be classified as critical non-users not because they knew too little about the computer technology to use it, but because they understand or were limited in the availability of these technologies to enact a pedagogy that could be supported by such uses. In this way, their non-use confirms Selfe’s argument that “when practices of technological literacy are studied closely, they reveal complex sets of cultural beliefs and values that influence—and are influenced by—collective, individual, and historical understandings of what it means to read, write, make meaning, and communicate via computers and within on-line environments” (Importance 12). Aaron and Anne both had a complex relationship with technology and their various literacies, and simply classifying their attitudes as negative toward technology ignores these relationships and influences.

Conclusion

Aaron and Anne represent an often neglected population of composition instruction, and to some extent, a generation complex in its attitudes and experiences with technology. This chapter has shown that Aaron and Anne with their MFAs were
more influenced in their approach to composition by their own undergraduate experiences than their creative writing and graduate experiences, even though their responses revealed the occasional attitude or approach most likely implicitly drawn from those latter experiences. They do not generally reflect the assumptions in the literature about MFAs and their composition pedagogies. There is a significant gap in the research here, not only in how creative writers and MFAs approach composition, but also in the larger, political situation that places MFAs in a role that they might not have had previous experience with. This chapter has also countered the expectations about technology use by Generation X, portrayed in the popular media, and to an important extent, in Hawisher and Selfe’s *Literate Lives*, as a technological savvy generation immersed in many technologies. Aaron and Anne both used computer and other technologies extensively, but their expertise was very difficult to classify, and their attitudes toward its use in the classroom, although negative, were not inspired by any lack of expertise, but by their own choice and by extension, their own educational backgrounds.

Though Aaron and Anne taught under very different circumstances, he a tenure-track assistant professor at a community college, she a writing instructor at a public university, their lack of similarity in their pedagogy and approaches to technology was more a result of their individual agency and educational backgrounds. As both were fairly young, the proximity of their own experiences as students exerted the greatest amount of influence on how they approached technology integration. Both relied on presentation technologies, though Anne allowed more options in how these technologies were used. Both had negative attitudes toward technology in their classrooms, though Aaron considered this more a result of a lack of resources and commitment to computer
use in college settings. It is difficult to generalize about either, nor was it intention. Instead, both portraits reveal one layer to the current state of technology use in the composition classrooms.
CHAPTER FOUR

JENNA, LYNN AND ANNA: LITERATURE, COMPOSITION AND THE PROMISE OF TECHNOLOGY

There are all these people out there, and they use computers, and they are very sophisticated with computers, and here’s me, the girl, who can’t do it.

-- Jenna

I am very interested in [technology], and I have been teaching in the computer lab for the last 3 or 4 years. And I just think you have to always be aware because the students are so much...they are so technically aware, they’re better at it than I am, they have an intuitive feel for how things work, and I think the medium does have a bearing on the writing.

-- Lynn

I love the way that technology improves students’ capability for research and the way it improves my ability to demonstrate certain points in class. However, although I enjoy my online classes, there’s no substitute for the face-to-face interaction in the classroom.

-- Anna

Introduction

Jenna, Lynn and Anna represent a different generation of composition teacher than Aaron and Anne. Each was educated in literature but instead turned to the teaching of writing as a compromise, in order to stay within the field of English. They ended up continuing to teach writing because they liked it. From the youngest, Lynn, at age fifty-one, to Jenna, age sixty, they represent the baby boomer generation, but also a generation who was taught under a different set of assumptions and within different social and political contexts – namely, the early years of composition’s legitimizing move as a discipline. Their responses revealed that these teachers maintained very different rhetorics of both technology and teaching than those revealed by Aaron and Anne.
This chapter is split into four parts. The first section is focused on Jenna, an instructor in a nationally recognized writing program at a prestigious research university in the Northeast region of the United States. The second section is about Lynn, a writing teacher for twenty-five years and instructor at a public university in the Midwest. The third section covers Anna, a community college professor in the South. The fourth section offers analysis as detailed in Chapter Two. Just as in Chapter Three, I analyze the informants’ responses in order to find their impetus for pedagogy, how each used technology, and their attitudes toward technology.

As in the previous chapter, the informants are presented as they described their experiences about their literacy memories, school memories, teaching experiences, attitudes about technology, and an imagining of the future of composition, each section following a pattern of response to earlier literacy memories preceding those of responses about education and teaching. In some instances, as before, I situate informant’s descriptions of their experiences in composition’s historical and theoretical context as a means of framing potential influences to these informants. Also, as before, I show how each informant has enacted a pedagogy that she felt comfortable with, and thus may not have been open to the technology critique that the computers and writing community often seems to support. This chapter presents three subjects who can be seen as both representatives of their generation but also as unique individuals; the chapter will examine the rhetorics of technology and teaching that corresponded with each of their literacy and education experiences.

Jenna: Technology, Literature and Tradition

Jenna, a university writing teacher for over thirty years, said that she does not teach her students how to write. Students “want to learn, but to learn by being led, not
by instruction.” Her role, she described, was to “coax” them along, and provide the occasional external resource. For Jenna, writing was about doing. And teaching with technology, whether it was print technology or computer technology, was using that technology as a supplement, a thing not integral to the process of learning. Jenna’s response here was very much a product of her education and experiences with both teaching and technology. Jenna was born in 1945. She did not earn her BA until she was age thirty, and she completed her PhD when she was thirty-nine. Educated in Twentieth Century British and American Literature, she began teaching writing because it was a job, and she stayed with it because “she really liked it,” finding it to be “personal and involving.” She felt that her literacy started late partly because, she said, her parents never read to her at home. Her education was built on her own curiosity with little external influence. Her memories of literacy and education involved teachers who respected her, recalling a professor in college who treated his students as “intelligent adults.” Her teaching reflected this same privileging of the student as intelligent adult, and her approach was mostly a product of this personal experience and her own success engaging with students with little medium or supplement to dilute that engagement. In many ways, her pedagogy and experience build a very complex response to teaching, technology and literacy. In this section, I will address Jenna’s literacy and teaching narrative, intertwined with composition theory and history in order to situate her experience, just as I did in the previous chapter. However, I also will address some issues of technology and supplement, and possible intersects between technology and gender revealed in Jenna’s narrative.

The first item to note from Jenna’s narrative is a reflection of a pedagogy sans material technology – though I maintain that pedagogy is itself a technology: a process
or model, constructed of other technologies, themselves a construct of other technologies. For Jenna, the routines of her pedagogy were to connect with students. Jenna believed strongly in a conference approach to teaching writing. She had half hour conferences with ten students per week. These conferences helped students make sense of their ideas and to allow them to better express those ideas. Her pedagogy based on having a student struggle to make meaning with his or her experience to guide him or her is a type of expressivist pedagogy (Tobin 6), or “subjective rhetoric” (Berlin Writing Instruction 145). I have addressed these arguments in the previous chapter: theories of writing espoused by Peter Elbow and Donald Murray in which writing is an individual or unique process of doing, and that if a writer needs help, then he or she should seek another person (Elbow 49) rather than heuristic or any other supplemental material. Although such a pedagogy saw its development and increased interest in composition at a time that parallels Jenna’s own education in the 1970s and 80s, its appeal to Jenna was also derived from Jenna’s personal esteem for a professor who treated her as an “intelligent adult.” Despite what she may consider is the liberating nature of such pedagogy, Jenna’s approach to “coax them [the students]” still placed her in a position of power. She became the primary means by which students learn. As Carol Stanger argues in a feminist critique of the one-to-one conference approach, “the instructor doesn’t consider his or her thirty students as a group, a class; instead, they are only thirty individuals.” (35).

Nevertheless, Jenna found these conferences to be very important for her students, and they supported her belief in treating her students like intelligent adults. However, her classes were not completely based on a Garrison model in which all interaction was conference-based. Jenna, in fact, expected her students to interact with
each other in class. Yet, a pattern begins to emerge in her pedagogy that can help explain why she did not put much trust in material technologies. Although Jenna used class time so that students could hear differing opinions, she also valued the opportunity class time afforded so that her students could see growth in themselves and in their peers, and to see her as “an adult model” of how they should interact. As such an approach emphasizes the search for the authentic self, the “intelligent adult,” it also is not facilitated by pedagogies that seek to disrupt such notions. For example, technologies like electronic discussion boards, blogs and synchronous chat, ones that make it “difficult for teachers to maintain a notion of students discovering their authentic selves through writing when student writers try on and exchange identities” (Faigley 191), would not facilitate Jenna’s pedagogy. Using such technologies would have been difficult for Jenna because not only did she lack the expertise and theory that the computers and composition community has built from such work, but it would have been difficult for her to see the intellectual growth that she came to rely on as part of her pedagogy.

Further supporting her expressivist approach to composition, Jenna’s motivation as a writing teacher was to provide encouragement and opportunities to learn, with her final goal being that “if one thinks well, one can write well.” It could be argued that such a goal is “inner-directed” (Bizzell 268) and neglects the contexts, forums, and effects of real rhetorical practice. Patricia Bizzell describes such inner-directed development: “once students are capable of cognitively sophisticated thinking and writing, they are ready to tackle the problems of particular writing situations” (328). Jenna’s approach that used conferences as a means of working individually with her students, and her class sessions that relied on class discussion of readings, is worthy, as research in
writing instruction has shown that such an approach has many positive effects (Hillocks 126; Herreman 6). However, her role “as adult model,” placed her in a particular position as expert. Additionally, her approach to conferencing was, “apprentice writer to editor” (Simmons 222), further entrenching her expert position. Jenna did not see supplemental technology as useful here because she did not have mastery over it enough to be in an expert position.

Her own literacy and educational experiences played a role in influencing her position on teaching and subsequent lack of expertise in certain technologies. Experienced teachers, or most any professional with over thirty years in his or her field, have been subject to the many technologies that have passed through the profession. An argument here is that teachers have seen the ephemeral nature of material and immaterial technologies in the classroom, and have pieced together a seemingly timeless means of instruction that does not rely on cultural, social, or technological whims. Jenna was a possible example of this phenomenon. She could not recall any technology that teachers used when she was a student. No tales of filmstrips and their annoying beeps, films and their proclivity to break, or mimeographs and their stains. For Jenna, technology was not even apparent in her recollection of her literacy or teaching experiences. Jenna’s writing classes “were a blur,” and the only text she remembered was “Birk and Birk’s Understanding [and Using] English.” Newman B. Birk, Genevieve B. Birk’s Understanding and Using English was first published in 1949, and continued on to a fifth and final edition published in 1972. The book itself is of little note, a standard usage book from the period that focused on sentences and paragraphs, and neither Kitzhaber, Crowley, Connors, nor Berlin mention it in their histories of composition. Though, as with many textbooks, the end of its publication did not stop its
assignments and exercises from continuing. Despite Jenna relying on individual instruction as part of her pedagogy, she still used “some of the exercises” from Birk and Birk to help students. Because the book was familiar to her in her composition class and in her many years of teaching, Jenna relied on it as a touchstone for issues of grammar and usage. Thus, familiarity grew into expertise. Jenna did not see supplement as integral to her teaching. Her pedagogy, that of individual conferencing and encouraging students to “trust-one’s-gut” was, thus, not limited (or expanded) by the transient technologies that she saw around her. Yet her persistent use of grammar exercises is peculiar. It could be argued that Jenna saw grammar exercises as fixed; after all, how does a grammar exercise in today’s usage manual differ from that of Birk and Birk? By a similar token, her reliance on past technologies, not necessarily the book as much as the mode of exercise contained in a composition book from the 1950s, represented her trust in a technology that did not change, that she did not have to learn a new code for. In either case, it was her routine use of these exercises that standardized them, which emphasizes her reliance on lore as a mode of inquiry (North 37).

To be clear about her use of grammar and usage exercises, she did not believe in explicitly teaching grammar. She used the handouts from Birk and Birk as well as exercises she developed herself when a student had a “specific problem.” She made it very clear that “especially with freshmen, I want the focus to be on writing, not mechanics. Always, I address content first on our tutorials. Language is second or later.” In fact, in response to a later question, she also stated that she would “never use a handbook,” and that she often relied on students to “bring in material” for the class. It is difficult to encapsulate her pedagogy because of these apparent contradictions. Her pedagogy was that of an experienced teacher of writing, who trusted her students to
work to improve their writing, considering the teacher as a guide through the process. She saw ten students a week in conference throughout the term, and discussed “mainly content.” But she also trusted in her students to hold academic-minded conversations in class with each other, with Jenna as a model of somebody who posed a question or observation for discussion. Although her pedagogy was very much influenced by the process, expressivist approach outlined in the earlier chapter, there was also a social element, though one lacking any real political or social agency. With those supplements and technologies where she had less familiarity and thus less expertise, she actively chose not to consider them for her classroom.

Another possibility for her reticence about technology is revealed in Jenna’s complex and gendered conception of computing technologies. Her earliest experiences with a computer coincided with a point when the “the computer moved into the mainstream of American life because the technology, developed earlier, was made less expensive, faster, and was increasingly standardized, and powerful new software programs made the computer a more powerful and more attractive tool in the hands of the business person, educator, and nonexpert user” (Hawisher et al. 132). However, Jenna recalled “having been let loose” on a “complicated PC without training. The codes I had to learn. I became impatient. I gave up. Also, I learn through experience. When I get a new computer, it takes many hours for me to feel that I’ve mastered it; and of course, my mastery is only of the basics.” As a result of this early experience, Jenna said that she had little interest in using computers in teaching. Although this confirms the previous argument, that she lacked the familiarity and thus expertise with the technology, her reasons for avoiding technology went a little deeper. When I asked her why she had little interest in computers, she said, “Because I’m a girl.” Such a response
is interesting for two important reasons. For one, the male-centric computer and science culture by which Jenna was framed most likely influenced how she saw herself and gender in relation to the computer; and two, her own reliance on personal experience for knowledge-making rather than abstracted, hierarchical knowledge-making, and the computer’s originating nature as a device that supported the latter style over the former.

During the period of Jenna’s college education, the Seventies and Eighties, most computing technologies were a male-dominated enterprise. Lisa Gerrard’s feminist focused survey of computer use surmised that from leisure to business to schooling, women have been excluded from computer use because of a male-centric computer culture that perpetuates violent and sexist video games, “bimbos” portrayed in computer business advertisements, and schoolwork that placed girls in menial job roles or gave them easier assignments in computer classes. Jenna’s immediate cultural experience was framed by this male dominated industry, leaving her to consider the computer and its contributing technologies as beyond her reach. The fact that women’s contributions to the development of computer technologies are often a silent one is also of note. From Ada Lovelace to the "women's work" of the Manhattan Project that involved women programmers who were “crawling around the ENIAC's [Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer] massive frame, locating burnt-out vacuum tubes, shorted connections, and other non-clerical 'bugs'” (Kraft ctd. in Morgall 91; Aschauer 9-10), women have played significant roles in the development of computer technologies – but Jenna never saw this silent history. The entire scope of Jenna’s life was one in which the computer went from punch-cards and flashing lights to being affixed with keyboard; in fact, it has been argued that the addition of the keyboard to the computer was done to provide
women with a familiar interface to the menial, unskilled labor of data entry (Kittler 246; Morgall 91). Furthermore, for Jenna, the computer was a device of automation, fixed input and output, and hence, it most likely fit into her worldview as used only for work that lent itself to such automation, namely the sciences. As David Bleich argues in “Sexism in Academic Styles of Learning,” science, and its quest for objective truth, has had a long history as a hierarchical and male-dominated endeavor (162). Although the computer, an “objective” and mechanical manifestation of science’s goal, was invented and developed during Jenna’s lifetime into something beyond this search for objective truth, Jenna’s experiences as an outsider saw the computer only in a very limited scope, and not as something that she had access to.

It was not until graduate school that Jenna saw the computer in a role outside of the sciences, when the technology was making its “Copernican turn” away from a pure “computational device or data processor, as it had been seen since its invention, but as a writing instrument” (Hawisher et al. 46; see also Lanham 31). Her own education and experiences with literacy and technology involved her “figuring it out” for herself and being respected as an intelligent adult; for her, figuring things out that were “mechanical” was frustrating. Because Jenna was overly concerned with the mechanics, the codes, with “knowing how the metal box works” (Tulley and Blair 56), she was unwilling or unable to see “what it can do for students” (Tulley and Blair 56). As Jenna could not recall any use of technology in her own schooling or literacy experiences, and because the mechanics of the computer seemed beyond her reach, she saw no real need or opportunity to include the computer into her classroom. She was successful in her own schooling and teaching by following the advice she gave to other teachers – “just trust your gut.” Technology, even in the cyborg era was external to the gut in the eyes of
Jenna, and very much not something she could do because she never gained any expertise with it. To consider her education and experiences, then, is to consider her pedagogy from a gendered position, and in fact, wonder what about computer technology was prohibitive for her because “she is a girl.” Additionally, Jenna did not consider or trust theory in her approach to teaching, and thus might be classified as a practitioner (North 21). Thus, an intersect between her experiences with teaching and computer technology holds a gendered component. Sherry Turkle, borrowing from Claude Lévi-Strauss, in her study of students using the LOGO programming language differentiates between Westernized, abstract planning and “primitive,” concrete bricolage. Though Lévi-Strauss used the latter term to refer to preliterate societies, Turkle argues in a less evaluative way that such a problem-solving approach is very apparent in contemporary society. Whereas traditional computer programming is a “rule-driven system that can be mastered in a top-down, divide-and-conquer way,” the alternative demonstrated in her study was a “desire to play with the elements of the program, to move them around almost as though they were material elements”(136). Though Turkle’s early work argued that the difference was gendered (i.e. “hard mastery” versus “soft mastery”), in a later article, she demonstrated that such essentializing is not necessarily the case. But parallel to Jenna’s history and her pedagogy that privileged practice and concrete example over theory, without the expertise or experience of the technology, she was unable to manipulate the elements the way she wanted and thus became frustrated with the computer.

It is a problematic argument to make, that her lack of expertise and experience with computing technology and subsequent lack of interest in these technologies, was a result of her feminine perspective in contrast to the male-centric history, invention, and
early utilization of computer technology. Judith Butler argues about the dangers of totalizing or universalizing any such binary identity as she outlines third wave feminism: “Universalistic claims are based on common or shared epistemological standpoint,” and that “the insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of ‘women’ are constructed” (Butler 19-20). And Brady Aschaur reminds us that “femininity, masculinity, and technology are social constructs, all three of which can be resisted and reconstructed” (14). Compounding research that has essentialized gender is work that essentializes computer use. Kramer and Lehman state:

much of the research on gender differences in computing is based on definitions of computer literacy that fail to take into account the varying contents and contexts of computing, failing to distinguish clearly between such curricular topics as computer science, software design and programming, the teaching of specific software (such as word processing or spreadsheet packages), and the role of computer technology in our society. (171)

The work of computers and composition, in fact, has fully critiqued such essentializing on many levels. After all, the most significant voices in the field of computers and composition have been the voices of women who have outlined research agendas and shared work fully reflective of feminist scholars and theory (see Selfe “Technology”; Gerrard “Feminist Research”; DeVoss and Hungerford; Blair and Takayoshi). The crux of feminist work in computers and composition has sought “egalitarian access to writing and reading communities,” and to “look critically at the context of what we know, of how we currently use computers, in order to rethink the relationship between techno/power.
and literacy efforts” (Selfe “Technology” 120-1). Whether encouraging those “students whose gender makes computing problematic” (Gerrard “Letter” 4) or exploring the cyborg “multipolar” possibilities through hypertext (DeVoss and Hungerford; see Haraway; Sullivan), image editing and “alternative/feminist forms of communication” (Tulley and Blair 59), computers and composition scholars have emphasized “gender as a social construct” (Rickly 137), and they have fully explored ways that computing technologies can be used outside the traditional cultural, social, and political vectors that often define arbitrary limits to how we communicate and make meaning. Thus, maybe Jenna’s own assessment of her lack of expertise with computing technologies is not an actualized assessment as a result of her gender or how she has defined computer literacy, but merely a post facto perception. Whether it is gendered or not, her lack of control over the technology prevents her from considering how it can be used in her classroom. In fact, in response to four separate questions about technology, she prefaced her answers with expressions of embarrassment, and that she considered the technology as a significant change from what she was doing. She recognized that computing technologies alter teaching and learning in significant ways, even as she liked “to stay with what works.”

This resistance to the technology also begs a larger question about the context in which she taught. Though Aaron and Anne both exerted some individual agency in deciding how and when computer technologies were used, Jenna’s situation was different. Though she had her PhD and had taught at the same institution for seventeen years, her title was only that of lecturer. Although another instructor in the program in which she taught utilized a computer classroom for his writing classes — which he also maintained — Jenna stated that there was little interest from the other teachers in the
program in using the space.\footnote{One of the early computers and writing community scholars and a co-author of a piece of early writing/revision software, at one time, taught and briefly directed part of the program which Jenna was affiliated with. Jenna made no mention of her, though I did not ask.} It could possibly be that this unnamed computer classroom instructor had not committed himself to institutional initiatives, hallway conversations, or workshops in support of “sustainable technology-rich instruction” (D. Selfe 17); or, it might simply be that Jenna was detached from whatever interest he tried to generate. Though she used to spend more time in training new instructors for the program, later she did not have much contact with others outside the program: “I come to my office, and I leave, I come to my office, I leave...I know that’s terrible, but I do.” As there was no institutional imperative to utilize technology in her classes, and as her position as a “tenure-like,” as she put it, full-time instructor did not require her to publish or keep abreast of current trends and research, she had no external motivation for considering computing technologies.

Jenna shared a complex narrative of her experience – as an older college student, as a woman, as a long-term writing instructor without incentive to consider alternative practices and theory of writing instruction – all qualities that could have influenced her to rely on her day-to-day experiences and the little theory she learned through lore and the program in which she taught. However, her style of teaching that emphasized one-to-one conferencing coupled with class discussion and relevant reading assignments, often brought into the class by the students, was a style of teaching reflective of sound composition theory. Furthermore, she expressed some recognition that she had not kept up with technology and that she recognized that computers were an important evolution in writing instruction. She was not a Luddite. She used her own computer as “word processor and file cabinet,” even as she expressed embarrassment that it was all
she used it for. However, Jenna maintained a reticence about computer technologies in her classroom partly because she lacked significant models of computer use in the classroom, and partly because she believed that she just could not get involved with things that were mechanical because she was a girl.

Lynn: Literature and the Ever-present Promise of Technology

Lynn, although ten years younger than Jenna, earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees at about the same time as Jenna, going on to teach composition for twenty-five years. And like Jenna, Lynn earned her degrees in literature, and remembered being a good student with a great deal of individual interest in literacy. Furthermore, Lynn also had a distressing experience with early computer technology, just like Jenna. Yet, Lynn represented a different type of literature trained writing instructor, one who embraced technology, even if she did so a bit uncritically. Though also similar to Jenna in that there are many elements in her perception of learning and writing that correspond with an inner-directed writing process approach (Bizzell 368), Lynn demonstrated a general understanding of some theoretical debates in the field of composition. Thus, Lynn in some ways countered the experiences of Jenna, and further complicates making any larger assumption about a generation’s outlook toward computer technologies in the classroom. Lynn, in fact, demonstrated a great deal of interest in computer technologies for the writing classroom, but felt more constrained by the lack of resources due to her position.

Lynn earned her PhD in English literary theory in 1984 from a top-tier, highly selective Midwest university. She was unable to find a job teaching in her specialty, so settled for a full-time lecturer position teaching writing from the university at which she earned her degree. Although she was only “interested in it [teaching writing] because it
was employment,” she ended up teaching writing there for nineteen years as a full-time lecturer before moving to another university in the Midwest as a full-time lecturer. Like Jenna, Lynn’s experience of earning a PhD in literature only to teach composition is common, and can be looked at in a few different ways. Susan Miller writes, “a surplus of English PhDs in literature, can make available human resources that have traditionally been closely regulated to guarantee that their scarcity will dispose them only in competitive and ‘proper’ social circumstances” and that “excess women, and perhaps excess PhDs may take on new roles that cloak their real status as surplus” (132-33). Such a condition creates what Miller names as the “Sad Woman in the Basement,” representing the “desired or the desiring but always displaced representation of maturity” (138). Lynn, a teacher for twenty-five years in the same profession, but remaining at the same level in the academic hierarchy, who looked for jobs in literature, but always settled on composition, seems to represent Miller’s critique of the profession.

Though Susan Miller may call it a rationalization (133), some teachers like Lynn, remain teaching composition because they like it. Sharon Crowley sets up a less critical reading: “Many people become interested in composition because they want to teach...they desire to serve the university community by helping students to write better” (119). Though Lynn did look for a job in literature at one time, she continued to teach composition because she liked it. And later, she found connections with her graduate work and composition. She recalled the connections as follows:

Being theoretically minded I soon discovered a lot of the research I had done on my dissertation, which was on phenomenology and deconstruction, was already being translated into the field of composition,
and applied, so I think some of my teaching pedagogy was related to my theoretical understanding.

Crowley goes on to echo Miller’s concern that teachers of composition come to realize that “teachers of the universally required course are underpaid, overworked, and treated with disdain” (120), but Lynn did not seem to share that specific perception during the interview. She did, however, express a desire to have more freedom to do research and improve her understanding of theory and teaching, an opportunity that was not fully possible given her 4/4 teaching load of twenty-three students per class.

In her position as a writing instructor, Lynn did not have the responsibility to publish or participate in the field outside of her immediate context. However, as I already shared, she considered herself and pedagogy theoretically informed. Her recollection of theory, much as Aaron’s, was situated in a particular period. For Lynn, when she was learning how to teach, she “had discussions about the expressivists versus the subject people…Bartholomae…and the constructivist people who were interested in language communities and the disciplines, and getting into disciplines, as if each discipline had its own foreign language.” This part of her narrative is revealing in how she cast these theories/ists, but also in how she considered them for her teaching. For one, the expressivists never much challenged those like Bartholomae who argued for composition to identify itself as a discipline that focused on “academic writing” (480) rather than writing in general. In fact, it was the other way around. The Eighties saw the introduction of critical theory into pedagogy, for good or ill, that foreground issues of power, hegemony, and discourse vis-à-vis that sometimes Procrustean addition of Foucault, Bakhtin, and Derrida to composition studies. Such work also entered the scholarship of computers and composition, with feminist critiques of power (Selfe
“Technology” 121), and the indeterminacy of constructed, postmodern identities
(Faigley 191), though such research remained within the confines of specific computer
technologies. This critical academic agonism responded to “uncritical,” “writing without
teachers” that could, in fact, never be so (Bartholomae 481). Lynn recalled Bartholomae
as the challenged, though Elbow and others who had been classified expressivist never
really saw a conflict (Elbow 491).

Furthermore, Lynn seemed to convey doubt that writing in disciplines outside of
English was anything equivalent to a foreign language. Although, arguably, writing in
the disciplines is not entirely equivalent to a foreign language, there is more to teaching
writing in the disciplines than a cursory audience analysis. In fact, as Charles Bazerman
writes, “language forms are social typifications on which we rely to shape our meanings
into socially transmittable forms,” and that “within perceived forums of communication,
we also become that our utterances will be held accountable to various elements and
procedures considered relevant by people participating in that forum” (12). Disciplines
and discourses should change what gets taught in a composition classroom because
there is neither a universal academic language nor a universal one-to-one relationship
between culture, thought and language. Scholarship on the complex relationships
between thought and language (see Vygotsky; Rose) and thought and writing (see
Harris; Bolter; Ong) has had a significant impact in the field of composition. That Lynn
would seem to discount writing in the disciplines may be a reflection of her background
in literature. It is often the case that literature, conveyed through culture as ideal in
style and insight, is often considered from perspectives outside English as what those
who situate themselves in the discipline aspire to. In fact, Scholes writes, “members of
other faculties send us our students not so that we will teach them to write like social
scientists or engineers but precisely so that we will teach them how to achieve the grace, clarity, and energy that we admire in literary texts” (34). Though unstated, it could be surmised that Lynn considered that composition was concerned with the fundamentals of style and grace expected, and that ways of meaning were not effected by the type of writing that she taught or should teach. Though again, this may not be entirely fair to Lynn based on what she chose to share of her understanding of composition theory. Her subsequent experiences teaching may have exerted a more subtle change in her opinion about the topic than she may have been aware of. In fact, she did maintain when considering computers in the composition class that “the medium does have a bearing on the writing.” One interpretation of this incongruence could be that what she may have recalled was an earlier argument about writing in the disciplines, and maybe she had not considered her position fully since that time.

Although Lynn considered herself informed by theory, albeit the theory that she was familiar with in graduate school, she maintained that her own pedagogy was mainly influenced by other teachers. She stated, “I really thought through my pedagogy theoretically, but I would say that when I was actually in the classroom, it was those phenomenal teachers that were guiding me the most.” Similar to Jenna, Lynn’s many years of teaching and applying what she learned from her students and their writing processes and habits was her primary “research.” In the impetus for pedagogy section in this chapter, I address practice as research, and consider why Lynn and the other teachers in this chapter may have relied on practice so heavily. However, a perception about what Lynn saw as good teaching in particular merits some analysis. Lynn described her own pedagogy as tied to her observation of other teachers, especially when she was an instructor in her earlier university. She described it as follows:
What I discovered was that what makes a teacher wonderful is something totally idiosyncratic. It is personality, charisma kind of thing, but that was instructive too figuring out, what do I have that is special. I’ve got something special too, and I just got to figure out what it is and work with it. Then, of course, the other thing was, I think that in that situation in [my previous university], and because we were allowed to do whatever we wanted to, and you could watch this unfolding of idiosyncrasies, there was a lot of sharing, and you could see different things played out in a lot of different ways. So it was a very stimulating kind of environment...very experimental.

Lynn considered “good” teaching as something without criteria, at least the type of criteria that is often taught in graduate school or in education classes. After all, what idiosyncrasies make a writing instructor “good” as opposed to a raving lunatic? Lynn could not really define what those qualities were except to say that they had to do with charisma and that “something special.” Figuring out what her “something special” was, then, became of vital importance to her. Truth be told, that “something special” could be a vast encyclopedic knowledge of theory in rhetoric and composition, or even a comprehensive understanding of multiple discourse and communication practices. But for Lynn, she saw this x-factor as charismatic in nature. Lynn also saw the exploration of one’s idiosyncrasies inexorably linked to curriculum, or at least the limits of curriculum. Her first instructor position was very different from the one she held when interviewed. Although she previously had many opportunities to teach what she felt like, as did all of her colleagues, when she moved to her next position, she taught under a more fixed curriculum, in which all instructors had to use the same grading criteria
and follow a program-wide portfolio exit phenomenon. Though she casts idiosyncrasies as charismatic in nature, the assumption here is that these qualities are in fact a bit more complex. After all, if it were only charisma, then curriculum would not matter much. As Lynn put it, the qualities at play in determining good teacher were a manifestation of these idiosyncrasies: “I think all good teaching happens when it is a manifestation of your own presence, whatever that is.” Lynn’s assessment of good teaching and the qualities of a good teacher are connected, and seem to ignore traditional qualities such as expertise.

One of the more interesting points about Lynn was her experience and eventual interest in computer technology. Although she had little exposure to technologies as a student, except for the occasional presentation technology (i.e. film and vinyl records), she developed an interest in computing technology in graduate school. She recalled:

In the 1980s, I was involved in a project where we were trying to asses how word processing was impacting writing, and we actually sat down with multiple copies of papers and charted additions and deletions, it was crazy, but, you know, there was a real interest in trying to figure whether this word processing thing would make people more likely to revise, and how.

Lynn’s memories are representative of one of the “dead end” research strands (Hawisher et al. 50) that occurred during the earlier days of computers and composition research. As computers were mainly considered a computational device for automating certain processes, computer software that analyzed style or grammar (see Haswell “Automated Text Checkers”) or prewriting heuristic (Burns qtd. in Hawisher et al. 55) were some of the earliest “writing” programs written. The motivation behind these processes
coincided, as Hawisher et al. argue, with the “revolutionary” change in composition that saw the writing process become a primary topic of inquiry. Writing software that analyzed certain writing qualities could thus be used to then quantify these qualities for analysis, and thus help the student see the significance of his or her error. Why such research was doomed had to do with many factors, but two are interesting to note when we consider Lynn’s experience. For one, the 1980s were a time that held a lot of promise for computer technology, a period of “intense excitement and hope” (Hawisher et al. 52), when much in “overoptimistic” hype was bandied about (Selfe and Selfe 482); or, as Richard Haswell writes, “a particular combustion when technology and writing research meet that might be called the ‘novelty effect’” (“Automated Text Checkers”). In other words, because the computer was fairly new to writing and its instruction, it became a topic of interest in graduate school for Lynn; such cutting edge work often opens up at least possibilities not entirely recognized by more established research agendas. When the “novelty” wore off, so to speak, then not much remained.

Another factor that could have contributed to the demise of the early work on computers and composition that Lynn was interested in was a theoretical shift in the field of composition. The process movement, itself arguably a product of the expressivist techniques of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow and the more research focused formalism of Linda Flower and John Hayes, did not paint an entirely complete picture of writing as a communicative process – opening up what Berlin called “the New Rhetoric” (“Contemporary Composition” 242) in which writing and its interpretation was a “dialectical interplay between the individual and the world” (243). If rhetoric was “principally the method of discovering and even creating knowledge, frequently within socially defined discourse communities” (Berlin Rhetoric and Reality 183), then how
was a computer able to automate the almost infinite values associated with these socially defined locations? Computers and composition later adopted a CMC or an open-computing research agenda because CMC shifted the focus from product/process-based text analysis to “transform[ing] classes into active social sites of intellectual exchange” (Hawisher et al. 150).

Of course, Lynn still utilized computer technology in her class, despite the shift in the community’s research focus. However, it was unclear exactly how she utilized these technologies even as her appraisal of these technologies recognized current work in computers and composition. She stated:

I am very interested in it, and I have been teaching in the computer lab for the last 3 or 4 years. And I just think you have to always be aware because the students are so much...they are so technologically aware, they’re better at it than I am, they have an intuitive feel for how things work, and I think the medium does have a bearing on the writing.

Here, Lynn expressed the same interest that she felt when she first became aware of computer technologies in graduate school, but it is not very specific as to how she would use these technologies. From this perspective we can see what Hawisher and Selfe have named the rhetoric of technology, in which “those who use computers for composition instruction speak and write of ‘the effects of technology’ in overly positive terms” (“The Rhetoric” 56) which fails to consider what we want computers to do and what we actually use them for (“The Rhetoric” 57). Many in the computers and composition community have maintained a “critical” approach to technology since Hawisher and Selfe wrote the article “The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class.” Furthermore, Lynn recognized that her students had more experience with computers
than she had, but she still felt that computers were important for “freewriting” and research despite her lack of technological expertise. Yet, unlike Hawisher and Selfe’s assessment that those who are not critical of technology consider the computer “good in and of itself” (56), Lynn recognized the medium/writing impact for the computer; as Bolter writes, “the computer is always doubling the author for the reader, just as it doubles the reader for the author, interpreting and misinterpreting each to the other” (199). Lynn maintained a great interest in the technology, but understood that computers held a different type of composing and reading for students. To consider a social epistemic view of rhetoric, as argued by Berlin and others, is also to consider the material and social construction of the technologies that mediate and constitute communication. Although Lynn did not seem to maintain a theoretical stance on the topic, she was aware – she was paying some attention – to the ways the medium, communication, and her students intersected.

Lynn also seemed to offer a particular understanding of the rhetoric of technology when she talked about research with computer technologies. She stated, “with the World Wide Web, its expanded even further to research methods, and it is revolutionizing what counts as research, and you know how people do research, so I don’t think you can avoid it really, and it’s revolutionizing everybody’s sense of what writing is.” Once again, she seemed to use the language of “revolution” to encase research using the web. However, she also added, “I think a good kind of imitation can occur when people are exposed to so many texts that are out there. We worry about plagiarism, but I think there is a good kind of imitation that can take place, so, um, you know, it’s a real interesting area.” Once again, although she seems to uncritically and enthusiastically embrace technology in her initial portrayals, she also demonstrated an
understanding of a current and important issue in the field of computers and composition, that of authorship and remix culture. Lynn recognized that there was an issue, and considered how it might impact how and what she taught her students. Of course, there are a few ways to read the specifics of Lynn’s response here. On one hand, Lynn, trained in literature, might have connected with the idea of imitation as a means of teaching style, which migrated from nineteenth century rhetoric classroom to literary analysis (Connors 279). Yet, her use of imitation was in the context of research and the Web and an academic conference on the topic. Therefore, she most probably meant the more complicated ideas currently debated in cultural and academic forums concerning intellectual property. Current computer technologies have challenged many assumptions about traditional authorship (Joyce; Bolter) and intellectual ownership (Howard; Lessig), and thus create a “problem” for those who maintain that writing is a wholly original enterprise of unique expression, a rather incongruent assumption considering the concurrent belief of a social epistemic rhetoric. Here, Lynn recognized that the computer offered not the destruction of original thought, as some have portrayed it, but as an opportunity to reconsider research and writing.

Lynn’s participation with research on computers and composition while she was in graduate school seems to have had the greatest influence on her eventual interest in technology as a teacher. Further defining Lynn’s interest in computer technologies is slightly problematic when considering that she, like Jenna had a bad experience with the technology early on. Jenna, on an early computer, became frustrated in not being able to process and format the text because of complicated codes. Lynn also had a bad experience with the technologies, and yet, still found a means to utilize current technologies to help her teach. Lynn shared, “I actually word processed my dissertation.
It was one of the rudimentary word processing programs. It was called the *Word Handler*, but I called it the Word Mangler when I lost 70 pages of my dissertation.”

*Word Handler* was an early word processor, one of the first to display lower and upper-case letters on screen for the Apple IIe. Although this seems a pretty distressing computer failure, Lynn continued to have an interest in the technology. So, despite this experience, and despite her lack of exposure to technology as a student, Lynn found interest in technology in graduate school, and later continued to integrate some computer technologies into her classroom.

For the future of the composition classroom, Lynn shared a common vision, but one reflective of her approach to teaching. She stated that “there will always be computers,” and imagined that each student will have one. She also speculated that a projector probably would not be necessary because everybody would have streaming video on their own laptop, all integrated. What is interesting to note is that these qualities exist on the most mainstream of CMS systems such as Blackboard, and are easily implemented via straight web-spaces by the more technologically inclined. Her vision of the future, then, is that each will have their own laptop. Such a belief is common, and has already been implemented in some universities and programs. And issues of access are being addressed by the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) initiative at MIT’s Media Lab. Thus, her future of computers and composition is really just an idealized present.

What Lynn felt she lacked as a teacher were the resources for personal development and research in computers and composition. She did not consider herself a specialist in the field, and did not seem to share a lot of the more theoretical concerns that computers and composition often debates, but she was aware of those in the field
and of the work being done. Her own enthusiasm for teaching and wanting to work further on technology issues in composition in some ways belied her position as a writing instructor of over twenty-five years with a PhD in literature. As an instructor, she had little pressure to publish or perpetuate a research agenda, yet she maintained an interest in composition theory, even if her perspective was rooted in her experiences as a graduate student. Lynn is yet another practitioner, much like the others in this chapter, who relied on her experience with students as primary means of directing her interests and approaches to teaching. As students are inundated with digital culture, she too adopted interests to continue to be student-centered and remain relevant, which, in fact, could be her “something special” that she saw as good teaching.

Anna: Technology-rich Community College

Like all of the informants in my study, Anna is a unique character in her background and experience with the teaching of writing, even as she confirms and challenges assumptions about what has influenced her approach. Like Jenna and Lynn, Anna did not consider the teaching of writing as anything more than employment when she was first hired, and only later grew more invested in it, even though her degree was in literature. What really separates Anna from the other two informants in this chapter was her interest and experiences with technology in her writing classes -- experiences that led her to offer integration and critique of certain computer technologies. In this section, I show how Anna represents an experienced composition teacher who utilized technology and critiqued its uses and limits as she continued to reimagine the writing classroom.

Anna wanted to be a teacher, but a teacher of what, she did not know. “For as long as I can remember, I wanted to become a teacher, but I never thought I’d be a
teacher of writing. I should confess that I had a brief flirtation with chemistry during college, but generally I always wanted to teach English – and for me that meant literature.” Anna earned her Bachelors in English with a minor in education and chemistry in 1972. She went straight into graduate school, working as a graduate assistant, and earned a PhD specializing in Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Literature. Despite her specialty, she ended up hired by a community college to teach mainly writing where she has worked for thirty-three years. “The only reason I ended up in the writing classroom was that I was a grad assistant and taught comp for several years. When I found a fulltime job at the community college, I found that most of my responsibilities lay with comp.” Anna’s experience is not unique in this regard. Keith Kroll’s 1994 study confirmed that the majority of community college teachers held degrees in literature, and that most, despite their degrees, ended up teaching composition because it was the “primary work of two-year college English faculty” (Kroll and Alford 59). When Anna began teaching at the college in the Seventies, the missions and makeup of community colleges was a bit different. Where in the Seventies, more than half of community college teachers were full-time, by “1998, the full-time ratio had dropped to 38% and the part-time ratio had climbed to 62% (Cohen and Brawer ctd. in Cohen “Why Practitioners”). In fact, Anna was the only full-time faculty in English at her campus. It is often the case that community college composition teachers are seen as teaching “service” courses, with extensive student populations placed in developmental courses (Crews). As a result, the instructors hired are seen as student-focused as compared to research focused, or put a bit more cynically, expertise with people rather than the discipline. Because “scholarship and research in writing” never
interested Anna, and because “teaching came naturally” to her, it was an effortless fit for her to find a position that appealed to her in community college.

Teaching, thus, was a natural extension of her expertise rather than the expertise of others. Anna considered her experience and, to a second extent, inspiring teachers to be her largest influences to her pedagogy. Anna expressed some distrust about theory and trends in composition: “Most of the research I read seems to be completely divorced from the events in my classroom (and sometimes from reality). I have very little patience with researchers and writers who wax poetic about the joys of the writing classroom and rave about the processes and epiphanies of their students.” As with Lynn and Jenna, with more years of teaching experience, confidence in personal experience was extended past theory and research for Anna. There is more to be made of this condition in Chapter Five as well as in the analysis section of this chapter, but it bears repeating here – theory often idealizes students (Payne 101) as it also dismantles common practice and comfortable pedagogies (North; Schuster 41). To Anna, theory constantly challenged her understanding of her students as complicated individuals and her many years of practical experience. Put another way, Anna saw no need to fix what was not broken in her approach to students and pedagogy. Furthermore, Anna saw current theory as detached from her teaching. Douglas Park sets theory as the stage from which teaching is practiced, arguing that “pedagogy remains a separate art in itself, its techniques always contingent on the subtle chemistry of a particular moment in a particular setting” (51). Though this issue of theory versus practice has remained a consistent debate in composition and rhetoric studies, the sands of each side have shifted to the point that no clear border exists except that which each teacher calls forth. In the case of Anna, her practical experience was both greater and different from the
theory that she was familiar with. What makes this issue particularly enlightening as a locus for analysis is that her education – her theoretical foundation – was in literature, whose theory often is detached from the practice of the classroom.

From Jenna who was neither interested nor proficient with computers to Lynn who maintained a great deal of interest but lacked experience integrating technology, Anna was both interested in and had a lot of experience with newer technologies. In fact, although Anna did not consider herself a computers and composition specialist, nor was she published in the journals devoted to the topic as per my research protocol, I later found out that she co-authored an article on the use of MOOs in an edited collection on computers in the composition classroom in the Nineties. Although in this article Anna and her co-authors portrayed their research in response to Hawisher and Selfe’s “The Rhetoric of Technology” one of the first articles to argue for more theoretical and less sanguine expectations for computers in the classroom, in her responses to my questions, Anna expressed a great deal of hope in the promise of the computer, noting that “the possibilities for technology in the classroom are endless.” Furthermore, her expectations of the technology and its potential were tempered by her practical experience, possibly a subtle reflection of her distrust of theory: “I love the way that technology improves students’ capability for research and the way it improves my ability to demonstrate certain points in class. However, although I enjoy my online classes, there’s no substitute for the face-to-face interaction in the classroom.” There are a few items of note in this stance. For one, Anna seemed to see the computer in terms of both presentation (“demonstrate certain points in class”) and distribution/creation (“capability for research”) technologies. Anna, who also taught a
number of online classes, also demonstrated an understanding of computers as important communication technologies.

Yet, despite this complex understanding, Anna still trusted her pedagogy to “face-to-face interaction.” It is a difficult argument to hedge, whether communication technologies prevent the type of pedagogy that Anna expected to come out of face-to-face interaction. When CMC first entered composition’s field of view, as both topic of research and medium of classroom interaction, it added an important communication technology to the computer, and added an aspect to be “analyzed, in the spirit of pedagogy, for issues of power, inclusion/exclusion, and the play of race, gender, and class” (Hawisher et al. 185). The shift from CAI to CMC research, like the shift in pedagogies from the idealized expressivist individualism of the Seventies to the critical, social pedagogies of the Eighties and Nineties, was marked by the availability of technologies to facilitate this shift. For example, the MOO, a technology that has lost its cachet in composition, was one such technology in which users would create virtual spaces and interact in those spaces as a classroom. Anna understood the use of the benefits of the MOO for composition as evident from her article on the topic. Though much research looking at online classroom spaces has argued often conflicting views on whether a face-to-face or face-to-face-like interaction is possible (Yena and Waggoner) or even preferable (Faigley 180), these arguments are often predicated on the assumption that a comparison is possible or even useful. It may be generational to expect a classroom, work or social space to be similar to that which one has grown up with, so that the space truly is a virtual representation of a “real” space rather than its own space. For Anna, there was a comparison there. She saw CMC as a direct comparison/competition to the classroom and the technology as mediating this
interaction, and hence, she declared that there was “no substitute.” Such a condition also might suggest why MOOs lost their way – they were always trying to remediate reality rather than open up the space for a new type of communication or interaction.

Anna’s use of computers for multiple purposes further supports her experience and interest in the technology. Though she tried WebCT, she found it “cumbersome.” She also tried ConnectWeb, but finally settled on “a combination of webpages and email,” in addition to extra-commenting program features for responding to student writing, which is to say features that can be easily read by all software. Because CMS systems have inherent limits as turnkey solutions, and because propriety commenting features in word processors can only be read within particular programs, Anna’s expertise allowed her to use technologies that provided greater access and more options for both her students and her pedagogy. However, CMS systems do provide students more options to interact with the instructor in making the space their own. Where a static webpage is “controlled” by the writer/teacher, and although even discussion boards can represent the static page, CMSs provide more opportunities for students to customize, store, retrieve, and interact. It is not that Blackboard inherently is filled with these events, but that it has the options. As Evan Davis and Sarah Hardy argue “Only once a course begins to be used by a community of instructor and students does the space become dynamic and individualized.” Anna understood the promise of the technologies that she utilized, but for her, the structures were cumbersome, possibly because they were more interactive rather than creative in their design. Anna also used “highlighting and red comments” rather than built-in comment features for responding to student writing. By relying on extra-commenting program features, she could be assured that her student would be able to see her comments. Propriety comment
features such as those found in Microsoft Word provide some useful options, but they can be confusing for students to read/access if they do not have the right version or program. In either case, whether it was the use of webpage and email or commenting features, Anna demonstrated expertise with technologies that allowed her to both enact pedagogy that she had a lot of control over and allowed her students greater access. However, by this same measure, she also deprived her students some agency and some learning opportunities. For one, CMS systems allow students more control and experience in interacting with CMS systems, broadly defined, and what they may later experience with professional intrawebs and the like. Additionally, her reliance on extra-commenting program features might have prevented her students from learning and using certain mainstream software features that they might be expected to use in writing outside the university. Nevertheless, Anna’s motives appeared to address issues of access through simplifying technology interfaces and implicitly challenging the limits of mainstream interactive and distribution technologies (see Selfe and Selfe 492).

To understand Anna’s use of computer technologies, it is also helpful to look at the context of her situation. As argued in Chapter One, assumptions about access and the influence of context can have certain impacts on how and what technologies are used. Yet, as I have also shown in this and the previous chapter, teacher agency still plays a large role in the technologies actually implemented in the classroom. Anna shared that she, “taught students to post webpages and to write research papers integrated into webpages.” Although workshopping/teaching such literacies can be accomplished in traditional classrooms, it can be quite difficult. Access to computer labs and classrooms with certain technologies is often a better use of time when teaching such literacies. Anna’s college was rich in access and, thus, facilitated more interactive
technology teaching: “currently most of our classrooms are tech enhanced. I have a podium that is tied to a projector, a VCR/DVD player, and a computer. I can pull up webpages for instruction; I can use a word processor that shows on a large screen—it’s very handy. We also use SmartBoard.” As Anna’s college provided her with a great deal of access, she, unlike Aaron in Chapter Three, was able to enact her pedagogies much more effectively. It is interesting to note that she described certain presentation technologies. Although it was unclear how she was using these technologies, it can be surmised that she was presenting content (e.g. “pull up” and “shows”). Though she resisted certain technologies that comprised her context, she also utilized others that she found helpful for her pedagogy. In other words, she could have found the SmartBoard and projectors just as limiting or not useful for her pedagogy as she found WebCT and Microsoft *Word*, but her own agency prevented her context from totalizing or limiting her options to teach.

Anna’s thirty-three years of teaching experience offered her a great deal of experience from which to draw on. Her expertise with technologies allowed her to maintain and revise the pedagogies with which she was familiar. Although she had enough expertise to publish on a topic within computers and composition, she ended up not being a regular participant or contributor to the field. Her story is one in which the context of a technology-enabled campus and a pedagogy open to technology integration was tempered by her critical evaluation of the technology. What is interesting in Anna’s experience is that she distrusted theory and pedagogical whim, suggesting one of two things: one, that there are more ways to address technology integration without resorting to complex theoretical frameworks or, two, that the theoretical frameworks implicitly enacted within education and its technologies support certain uses of those
technologies without the participants being entirely aware or able to articulate just how indebted to theory they may actually be. For Anna, she believed that teachers should not “stay married to any one theory of writing. Everything changes.” Although her pedagogy was less defined than some other participants, it still reflected her own experience and the technologies which she came to rely.

**Analysis**

In this study, Jenna, Lynn, and Anna represent a more experienced generation of college and university writing teacher, educated in a field outside of composition, yet committed to the teaching of writing. As in the previous chapter, I will not suggest that their experiences could be generalized due to the small amount of data I collected and their differing backgrounds; however, I do want to emphasize that each of these teachers, with PhDs in literature and literary studies, was educated with a very different set of assumptions and expectations than those of composition, and were undergraduates themselves in programs not yet informed by composition research as we understand it today. As a result, their ages, social milieu, and the lack of defined research agenda when they entered the field led them each to rely on their own experiences in approaching the teaching of writing. Furthermore, such a context, although not deterministic, encouraged each to understand and integrate technology into the writing classroom in very different ways. Their narratives provide further example of the number of composition teachers who approach the teaching of writing outside the conversation of theory and practice that the specialist communities of the discipline maintain. The following section will address issues of technology use, impetus for pedagogy, and attitudes toward technology as outlined in Chapter Two and demonstrated already in the cases of Anne and Aaron. But first, as a matter of context, I
address a counterpart composition cohort to the MFAs considered in Chapter Three, that of the writing teacher with a PhD in literature.

The study of literature is often characterized by composition as detached from the practical experiences of students and their discourse practices. Trimbur summarizes such a stance when he writes of one of the flaws of the Modern Language Association as it is currently attended: “MLA was taken to represent the occupational hazard of academics’ removing the subject of their inquiry—in this case, literature—from the world of ordinary people and making it instead into a matter upon which to build careers” (135). Such a position is not all that foreign to some attendants of the academic disciplines. Both the 2004 and 2005 issues of MLA’s Profession devoted a great deal of energy to this crisis as it addressed theory, tenure, and the fact that the myriad of books that do get published in literary criticism lack much if any intellectual capital outside providing the author with tenure, and have even less capital in their lack of readership and application. Many have argued that literature should reevaluate its position, that its practitioners should focus more on teaching, Wendell Harris arguing:

if the humanities have important roles in universities and colleges, those roles are the encouragement of undergraduates to read literature, to enjoy encountering new ideas, to appreciate inspired (or merely interesting) uses of language, and to gain perspectives to aid in assimilating and evaluating the experiences they encounter. (48-49)

However, it is often the case that those trained in literature teach composition, or “get stuck teaching writing” as one literature professor described it to me during a job interview, and are not “excused” from it even if they do publish (Tumbleson 61). What teaching literature often entails that is altogether different from teaching composition is
as allusive to define as is determining why teachers trained in literature end up in composition. There are many historical, social, and individual tales that comprise the “damaging warfare between literature and writing” (Elbow *What is English* 95). As this tale is often addressed in histories of composition (see Kitzhaber; Connors; Berlin *Writing Instruction*), and as neither the milieu nor any specific circumstances of those histories have direct bearing on the informants in this study, I will leave the details to the aforementioned scholars. What does have immediate bearing to this study and the topic of how teachers with degrees in literature ended up in composition is two-fold: one, the correspondence between the relative age of rhetoric and composition programs and my informants, and two, the correspondence between the work of composition and the motivations to teach expressed by my informants.

Although rhetoric has had a storied, two thousand year-old past, its coupling with the teaching of written communication and the modern university is relatively recent occurrence; that is, if we define the discipline of composition as one that inhabits a realm and agenda of graduate training and scholarship. Both Lynn and Jenna earned their PhDs in 1984, and Anna earned hers in 1979. When all of the informants entered graduate school in the Seventies, there were, at most, only sixteen universities that offered a PhD in composition or rhetoric (Chapman and Tate 128), and even then, some of these programs were “questionable” (Covino, Johnson and Feehan qtd. in Chapman and Tate 125). As the selection of graduate school for most is tied to access (i.e. location, finances, and preparation), actively selecting one of only sixteen programs, each of which was less than a decade old, was probably not an option for any of my informants. Additionally, each “found” composition after the fact, an interesting quality still relevant today as most undergraduate and graduate degrees in English are literature-based, and
most jobs are in composition. What is more intriguing is when we look at how English found the modern composition graduate program. Richard Lloyd-Jones argues that these graduate programs developed in a way not unlike how my informants came to composition – after the fact:

As Research Universities accepted more graduate students in order to have more TAs, they forced managerial expansion. In response to conscience or public relations, deans asked research people to set up training programs and mass-management procedures to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching. Some of the training programs emerged as de facto doctoral programs in composition, and programs created an additional market for the fruits of our scholarship. (491)

In other words, the programs that did develop were designed to “train” practitioners and develop a scholarship agenda that would feed those programs and not larger academic or even English department purposes. Lloyd-Jones, in fact, continues his argument with some cynicism:

No matter what the character of our individual scholarship, the people who paid us often thought we dealt in the same world of secretarial correctness from which they had emerged as onetime college students. Anyone can teach comp, they thought, so let’s hire anyone, especially anyone who will come cheap without fringe benefits or long-term commitments. As a result of such low pay in many places (even with relatively small classes) the composition course generated more tuition than it cost—it was a profit center. The new money-short two-year
colleges especially found the solution useful, for there was an ample supply of people waiting to be exploited. (491)

Given that none of the informants in this chapter attended a university with any option to earn a rhetoric or composition degree, and also given that the programs that were in place maintained a particular philosophy and scholarship that was based on secretarial correctness, or even practice-based teacher education, the resulting educations of each of my informants could be nothing but literature-based.

Therefore, if we return to the narrative of the informants in this chapter, we see the pattern of English literature trained teachers who taught under low wages and with low commitments turned over to full-time instructorships or community college jobs after graduation, still maintained by low wages and low commitments. Each began teaching composition not because they wanted to but because it was employment, and only after the fact did they continue to teach it because they enjoyed it. Jenna and Lynn, both lecturers, are part of a much larger result of the de facto programs that train those that do not have degrees in composition. The lectureships inhabited by Jenna and Lynn are quite common in composition, with central WPAs working to “manage” the curriculum of non-specialist “anyones.” The future of these positions are firm, as they continue to save money and offer universities the ability to keep at least some of their student to teacher ratios low. However, this condition raises a cynical possibility that as more and more with composition PhDs begin to overpopulate the marketplace, as the composition doctoral programs have long since filled with senior composition faculty, the literature and even creative writing faculty will be edged out of these managed lectureships by overeducated, but low waged, low commitment composition PhDs.
Despite whatever dedication might be apparent in the fact that Lynn and Jenna have continued to invest decades within these positions, there was an expressed dissatisfaction in their situations. Jenna remarked, “they use us to lower [the student to teacher ratio]” and “it’s not a good situation...they pay us half of what they pay the faculty.” When Lynn stated that she might be interested in further research on computers and composition, she said that she would need a sabbatical, but then she laughed, suggesting that the option was not really available to her in her position. And Anna stated that because she was “the only full-time English faculty member...there’s not much discussion of computers and writing.” In all three instances, there was a lack of opportunity and access that traditional university professors are accustomed to, leading to some resentment (e.g. “it’s not a good situation”) and desire for more possibilities (e.g. “sabbatical” and “discussion of computers and writing”). Where Anne and Aaron seemed to enjoy their positions, even though they described their work-week as very busy, Jenna, and to a lesser though somewhat different extent, Lynn and Anna, shared some frustration with the situation – it was difficult, however, to note whether the dissatisfaction was a result of the conditions of teaching composition, their generation and expectations for a position in English, or their own individual desire to somehow return to literature.

This apparent dissatisfaction, of course, calls for a brief examination of the motives to teach composition despite (or maybe because of) the literature background of these informants. After all, a great many senior composition faculty in composition programs also received their degrees in literature, as a matter of historical circumstance, as just outlined. What separates the informants in the current study who also earned PhDs in literature, but never furthered their research or teaching agendas to teach in or
even begin a composition graduate program? One possibility for the variation in motivation might be related to academic traditions. Universities, at least to the extent observed by my informants, have privileged literature (Miller 234) and outlined a fairly defined scholarship of literary analysis practiced by the vast majority of those teaching writing (North 116). As a result, literature holds a particular type of capital that university faculty have come to respect, even if the actual work is not valued (Alonso 218). Thus, a “tradition” of literary analysis, perpetuated in English classes from secondary school through postsecondary education, maintains the capital and propagates a familiarity with the tradition and its expectations. To teach literature, then, is to maintain the traditions of education that each subject has come to expect in an English class. For those senior faculty who later entered composition as university professors, the possibility could very much be that their specialty or motivation was to break away from those traditions and define their own agenda. The computers and composition community has partly been defined by such scholarship of dissent as well. Even a brief survey of computers and composition scholarship emphasizes a community who has committed itself to critiques of traditions of education. That “technology is a means of change” from the university status quo (Flores 107), that standardization “compromises pedagogical innovation” (Rice qtd. in Inman 191), and that “computers and composition has both been connected to and “led its parent field of composition studies” (Hawisher et al. 283) are just a brief example of these critical calls. The scholarship of innovation, the rhetoric of technology, is often one that calls for constant theoretical change – change that is often in response to and agonistic with the traditions under which my informants trained in literature were educated. Another possibility could be that those who entered the field of composition and computers and
composition preferred the actual subjects of rhetoric and/or technology to that of literary studies. In either case, the informants in the current study all attempted to look for jobs in literature and found composition instead. Therefore, the strongest possibility for the difference is that my informants were motivated less by an academic impetus to upset the apple cart, educate future teachers, or delve into the mysteries of the sophists, but instead were biding their time with composition work until something better came along. Lest we fall to disparagement too soon, I will quickly add that each of these informants later and quickly developed a great deal of investment and expertise in the teaching of writing leading each to appreciate the teaching of writing as they grew more experienced – thus unseating the subtle influence that a couple decades of secondary/postsecondary education based in literature may have had.

Aaron and Anne, both younger and influenced by a much wider conception of language arts when they were secondary and postsecondary students (i.e. years of composition, creative writing, and literature pedagogy), were not as limited in scope to their eventual professions, and thus, might not have expressed their dissatisfaction as readily because their teaching conditions were not altogether different than what they expected. For Jenna, Lynn and Anna, the age of composition and rhetoric graduate programs and, the lack of these many years of influence by scholarship on the topic might have lead to countering expectations about the curriculum of English. These expectations may have led the three informants in this chapter to appreciate composition only after they had taught it for many years. They continued teaching despite a gentle dissatisfaction with the conditions of their positions because it was a familiar and rewarding job. We might imagine that their impetus for pedagogy, technology use, and attitudes toward technology would confirm this familiar/rewarding
aspect. With some exception, the analysis framework does support this position. This section continues by addressing these three items.

Impetus for Pedagogy

Assumptions about those who earned degrees in literature and teach composition are as varied as those assumptions about MFAs discussed in Chapter Three. Elbow addresses one of the concerns, asserting, “literature is content, a rich and complicated body of substantive and (above all) professional material. One indication of whether you have a ‘solid content’ to teach is whether you can easily make up exams and grade them” (Elbow *What is English* 113). What is concrete in composition or the teaching of writing? Elbow continues, “Grammar is a solid, and testable body of knowledge (113), suggesting that those trained in literature focus on teaching “secretarial correctness” (Lloyd-Jones 491) in their pedagogy. The related offshoot of such an assumption is the belief that writing classes not have content at all except for the details of language – Stanley Fish’s infamous comment, “Content should be avoided like the plague it is, except for the deep and inexhaustible content that will reveal itself once the dynamics of language are regarded not as secondary, mechanical aids to thought, but as thought itself” (see also Hairston)

Not a single one of the informants in the current study expressed such an interest. Each described possible and past themes in their writing classroom, Lynn introducing outside readings, Jenna having students bring readings to class. Though Jenna relied on some handouts from Birk and Birk’s *Understanding and Using English*, a handbook some four decades old, she emphasized that grammar instruction was only effective in the context of students’ own writing. These informants taught writing using multiple revisions and portfolios, and used conferencing to interact one-to-one with
each student. In these cases, the pedagogies were more reflective of composition theory than they were of literary theory and its “content.” The most apparent impetus for pedagogy, of course, is that each of these informants abandoned theory – literary or otherwise – because it could not answer their immediate questions and needs. For Jenna, Lynn, and Anna, the two primary impetuses for pedagogy were their own practice and the practice of the teachers that each had.

North describes two notable and relevant qualities of practice and the teaching of writing when he classifies Practitioners. For one, “it is possible to become a Practitioner with little or no formal training. Indeed, despite some changes in professional preparation patterns, that almost certainly remains the norm” (North 28). And two, “All Practitioner work, inquiry or not, can be described in a fully non-pejorative sense as reactive” (North 37). In the first case, it is obvious from all three informants, none of whom had any formal training in composition and rhetoric, and all of whom held specialties in literary studies, that their expertise in the teaching of writing was not a direct result of their education. None of the informants mentioned any way theory impacted their teaching. Lynn described how she was most influenced by “watching successful teachers,” and what made them successful “was something totally idiosyncratic.” Anna described how her teachers taught her “how to study literature, how to teach, and how to behave as part of an academic community.” And Jenna described the “wonderful practice” of a literature professor who had students write essays on novels before coming to class for discussion. They all became successful and invested teachers of writing, weathering the less-than-ideal conditions of part-time and community college work; none relied on theory in any significant way. The second quality relevant here, that of reactive inquiry is also important as a result of their
backgrounds in literary theory. Even if they had invoked theory, the theory under which they were educated most likely could not have answered their immediate teaching dilemmas. They each had to find their “idiosyncrasy” (Lynn) through reacting to their situations. Each had to develop their own routine (North 37), and then redefine that routine only when a practice did not work.

By contrast, theory, as defined by Charles Schuster, is constantly redefining situations and issues to the point that teaching is always in flux:

As an intellectual enterprise, theory encourages us toward self-reflexiveness. Its universalizing tendency leads us to generalize and synthesize; its abstracting tendency leads us to complicate and even subvert accepted points of view. Theory sets itself against the normative; its thrust is almost always to defamiliarize what we think we know, to compel us to reconsider that what we assume that we no longer have to worry about. (41).

As an impetus for pedagogy, theory, and specifically literary theory, can overly problematize a practice that has seemed successful and educative for its subjects. Jenna, Lynn and Anna grew to respect their own experiences and practice, as well as the general practices of their past teachers more than theory because it could answer and respond to their situations with greater relevance and authority.

However, Practitioners like Jenna, Lynn and Anna are not beyond the grasp and influence of theory. As Schuster continues to argue, “theory is a form of practice and that practice is the operational dimension of theory” (43) adding “Theory and practice thrive in an atmosphere of mutual tension” (42). Schilb further examines these tensions by describing the internal ebb and flow each struggles with. In the case of Jenna, Lynn
and Anna, their practice was partly bound by context and temporality (Schilb 93-94). However, the disciplinary status of theory and its proclivity to permeate epistemology (Schilb 92) and practice leads to its subtle introduction into the routines and reactions that each teacher engaged in. The implicit expressivist pedagogies that each of these informants described have been researched, theorized, and critiqued, though none of my informants, with the possible exception of Lynn, seemed to have much interest in these conversations. Furthermore, the theory/practice tension is also relevant in literature’s privileging of the former. The decades of teaching experience by Jenna, Lynn, and Anna confirmed their own expertise as it distanced them further from their original desire to teach literature. Maybe an unspoken resentment about what they wish they could have accomplished rests in their dissatisfaction with their teaching situations. It is difficult to tell from the limited data and focus of this study.

Nevertheless, as either managed subjects in lecture positions or the sole English teacher at a community college, the availability and application of theory most likely fell short in responding to and revising pedagogies and the unique situations each may have had. We might conclude by surmising that even though resistance to theory or understandings of past theory were articulated by these informants, their practice was in fact a result of a resolute means of inquiry and dissemination (North 36), and not as free from theory as they may have even been aware of.

Technology Use

There is a continuum of technology use represented in these three informants, which further supports the position that generation plays less of a role in the choice to integrate technology into the writing classroom. Jenna was reticent to computer technologies, and, to some extent, most technologies except for the occasional
distribution technology. Lynn, on the other hand, used technology mainly as a means of emphasizing revision and research methods, both casting the computer in the role of creation technology, but her use seemed uncritical and student sponsored – teacher motivated technology integration did not seem apparent in her pedagogy. Finally, Anna, who had utilized everything from MOO spaces to email, to responding to writing via word processor, represents a writing instructor in a fairly technology-rich community college.

As simple as this may sound, Jenna’s reticence to technology integration was most likely a result of her lack of experience with the technology and her lack of exposure as a student. Though she was born in 1945, she did not earn her PhD until 1984. Though many computers during the time were complex, the early computers and composition specialists were well into picking apart the technology for application in the classroom (Hawisher et al. 107). Nevertheless, Jenna never came into contact with this scholarship or those who taught with the technology. Her own pedagogy, based on conferences to work individually with students on their writing issues, coupled with class conversations in which students and she brought in texts, held no apparent option for technology integration. Her own bad experiences with trying to manipulate formatting codes on a word processor and a pedagogy that required little else than students and their writing instrument of choice, left Jenna with little need to explore other ways in which technology might be integrated into her pedagogy. Additionally, though she was teaching in a nationally recognized writing program, there were few whom she was aware of who integrated computer technology into the writing classroom. And, as a lecturer, she had little incentive to continue to read and reevaluate her pedagogy and the influence of current technologies. Thus, in Jenna’s case, her
technology use, or lack thereof, was most influenced by her context, moreso than any other informant in this study.

Lynn, on the other hand, not only had the opportunity to work with computers as a graduate student, but her campus situation was such that computer classroom use and technology integration into the writing classroom was encouraged. Her context and experience played such a large part in her options for computer technology use that it is a little peculiar her expressed interest surpassed instances of pedagogy/technology integration. Though teaching in a computer classroom space offers many opportunities to really experiment theoretically and pedagogically with the technology, Lynn did not express much experience with the space in that way. From the limited data I collected, it is difficult to outline every activity she might have tried in the computer classroom, but those activities she still utilized might have been emphasized more. As a Practitioner, it could be construed that her technology use was most likely limited to those student initiated activities such as essay drafting and revising, research and website evaluation, and email. Lynn did value presentation technologies. She remarked, “I like the idea of a big screen. It gives more a sense of community.” Whereas distribution technologies rely on the relationship between the medium and the individual, presentation technologies, as Lynn conceptualized them, offer a community atmosphere. Yet, in her use, just as in Aaron’s use, the teacher was the presenter of the information for consumption by the class. As I argued in Chapter Three, such use can deny students the opportunity to reimagine uses of the technology. Lynn wanted to learn more about integrating computers into her pedagogy and classroom. She said that she “would love a grant to Houghton, Michigan.” And she did pick up a few books on computers and composition. However, her situation as a full-time lecturer put certain
constraints on the opportunities available to her and the expectations that the department had of her. As practitioner inquiry is often disseminated via lore, in the halls between classes, and at the occasional workshop (North 51), in Lynn’s situation, options for computer use beyond what students might normally engage in would best be offered from her fellow teachers rather than the computers and composition community at large.

Anna’s interest in and experience with integrating technology into her teaching is interesting if only for the fact that she never had much exposure to technology when she was a university student. Her incentive to work further on the topic was wholly her own, placing her in contrast to Jenna who seemed determined by her context. Anna even expressed some disbelief in her situation: “When I started to teach writing, I never expected to become fluent in computers, but here I am.” Though her pedagogy and computer integration was rooted in practitioner motivated application, she still shared her experiences with the community. Yet, she was distrustful of theory, and instead expressed more faith in using technology, whether it was distribution, presentation, interactive, or creation, to achieve immediate teaching goals. Anna imagined a future of more software options, greater access, and more opportunities to teach writing – though positive in her assessment, she also believed that student/teacher interaction was the cornerstone to good writing pedagogy.

In each case, the informant’s pedagogy and context exerted the largest influences in the manner in which the technology was (or was not) integrated into the classroom. Jenna, Lynn, and Anna all were very much practitioners in their attitudes and experiences with teaching writing, and also, all seemed to reveal expressivist tendencies in their approach. What should be emphasized, however, is the fact that despite the
variation in approaches to technology, and the similarities in approaches to pedagogy, each instructor found uses for the technologies that they felt most familiar with, and felt the students would benefit the most from. Although a case could be made arguing that Jenna denied students opportunities to write in class via media that they were more familiar with, Jenna herself would have had been removed from her comfort zone, potentially creating a negative learning experience.

Attitudes toward Technology

As I argued in Chapter Three, there is another way to read the positive/negative/complex agonist view of technology if we consider attitudes toward the technology in addition to the actual experience with that technology, and how external factors can influence how we read these attitudes. What is interesting in the three informants presented in this chapter is that each corresponds more closely to the dichotomy defined by Gruber. This might confirm an argument that the labels themselves are a product of an older generation’s view of technology – that the rhetorics of technology are in fact the rhetorics of a particular generation. This is a difficult argument to address given the limits of my current study, but I will briefly address it.

The prerequisite arguments that define the scope of the good/bad/complex argument, in fact, are arguments that have defined the current agenda in computers and composition. The argument originates with the precept that “as writing instructors, we have not always recognized the natural tendency when using such machines [like computers], as cultural artifacts to society’s values, to perpetuate those values currently dominant within our culture and our educational system” (Hawisher and Selfe “The Rhetoric” 55), and that the dominant value perpetuated by the computer is capitalism (Selfe and Selfe 487). These arguments leveled against technology, or more precisely,
encouraging critique of technology, are Marxist in nature. Michael Heim argues that although Marxism “expired as a political and economic model” it persists, especially within academic communities, as “an unspoken model of how correct-thinking and postmodern people should regard society” (39). As “critical theory has often just another name for Marxian analysis incognito,” (Heim 39) and as critical theory was the de facto means of dialectical analysis during the Eighties and Nineties, it thus stands to reckon that the work of a generation of scholars was in fact highly critical of material means of production and control – a critique characterized by “Marxist dialectical materialism” (Heim 40). In other words, the computer – as a material product of the twentieth century, and arguably, a linchpin in social and cultural shifts comprising the move from the twentieth to twenty-first century – became the object to which some hooked their hopes, dreams, and fears upon. It also became an object of critique as representative of capitalist motives. Returning to Hawisher and Selfe, they argue that “as writing instructors” we somehow did not recognize this capitalist nature before, and that we should recognize this feature to understand the power relations and effects at play. My own exposure to critical theory would lead me to agree on many levels of this assessment. But it “does not matter at what point and what precise form technology enters the picture” (Harris 233) as “the utility of [its] tools is always measured against what could be done without them” (Harris 233). The first generation of scholars that asked questions about these technologies measure what they could and have done without them, imagining three conceptions that would correspond with the material availability and critique they were accustomed to – dreams, fears, and hopes. In other words, because the defining generation of computers and composition specialist was educated at a time when Marxist dialecticalism was the modus operandi of theoretical
critique, each saw the new technology in comparison to negative space before and ubiquitous space ahead. Aaron and Anne grew up with computers in the ubiquitous space and under different theoretical assumptions, and thus have far more complex views of technology. Jenna, Lynn, and Anne, however, could be labeled with the language that their own generation — which is also the generation of the early adopters of computers and composition — formulated in response to the three stages (past absence, current exploration, and future ubiquity).

Jenna, then, represents a teacher who fully appreciates past technologies, or the absence of the computer as a means of teaching literacy. It is not that she was distrustful or even dismissive of the computer, but that she did not need it to achieve her goals. Although computers and composition specialists might belittle her for not recognizing the impact that the technology had on current and future literacy practices, she did not pick an argument with them — she continued to teach successfully with expertise in familiar technologies. It was more her reticence than outright negative attitude that marks her approach to computer technology in the classroom. Whether such reticence is gendered or not is difficult to say, even though she seemed to have her mind made up that computer technology in her classroom was something beyond her ability.

Lynn, on the other hand, was very much the optimist. She reveled in the importance and potential impact that computer technology in the writing class offered. However, she also recognized that there was much she did not know in the field of computers and composition, and wanted to improve her understanding of the debates and practices. Her teaching, just as Jenna’s, did not suffer from her attitudes. Her optimistic approach to technologies that students were already familiar with allowed her
to improve her teaching by connecting with students on new levels than when she was a student. And as we saw with Aaron and Anne, a younger generation’s attitude toward technology is not as simple as it is often cast. Lynn did not do a disservice to her students, and in fact, opened up many possibilities in which she could herself learn from the complex and critical nature of her students’ technology use.

Finally, Anna, who very much was complex in her attitudes toward technology, was also more simply put, just a practitioner. Although she constantly reevaluated and changed her pedagogy and approach to technology throughout her teaching career, she did so with a purpose to improve her own teaching more than change the teaching of others. Her scope, although limited, was enough to give her a great deal of experience and also provide her with the “practical” expertise that her students came to appreciate.

Conclusion

Jenna, Lynn, and Anna represent an older generation of composition teachers who teach and learn as practitioners because they had neither the exposure as undergraduates to the growing work of composition, nor the opportunity to earn graduate degrees in the early days of the field. Though each became an invested and engaged teacher, none set out originally to teach writing. Their backgrounds in literature prepared them less than their actual experiences as teachers and students for their careers, so each has some distrust or detachment from theory. Jenna, Lynn, and Anna also represent the attitudes of the baby boomer generation with regards to technology – even those with the most complex of attitudes toward computer technologies most likely could remember the negative space before, and thus will have certain assumptions and expectations about the current and future technologies that fill
those spaces. Each understood a different rhetoric of technology, and each practiced a
different pedagogy, yet all held to practice as their primary means of inquiry.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The responses of Aaron, Anne, Jenna, Lynn, and Anna bring much to beginning to understand the influences of composition theory, education, and personal experience in the consideration of technology and the teaching of writing. A great deal of the information was gathered in order to situate how and why certain technologies were used in the composition classroom, though this data is rich in other ways as we consider the future of composition and rhetoric. For one, contemporary theory does not appear relevant to some writing teachers who were not explicitly educated in the discipline. Two, “even though we have achieved professional status for some of our members, it has coincided with (and may have actually caused) an increased exploitation of other members of the field” (Gere 125). However, the focus of the current study was to gain a better understanding of technology use in the composition classroom, and to provide some recommendations for those specialists in computers and writing so that they may better address the often complex needs of writing teachers who do not consider themselves specialists with technology, and in the case of this study, were not extensively trained within the field of composition. This chapter begins with a brief comparison summary of the impetus for pedagogy, technology use, and technology attitudes shared by my informants; this section also addresses what these informants found most useful in their teaching and revisits the warrants from Chapter One to show why some of the work the computers and writing community does never reaches others in composition. The second section of this chapter provides five recommendations for those specialists who would like to better address the larger population of writing
Outsiders Looking In, Insiders Looking Out, and Outsiders Who Walk On By

There are many ways to read the experiences that each of the informants chose to share in the current study. I asked informants to respond to five question nodes: literacy memories, school memories, teaching experiences, attitudes about technology, and an imagining of the future of composition. I used these answers to formulate a three part analysis framework partly informed by current and past work in computers and composition: impetus for pedagogy, technology use, and technology attitudes. Thus, the final analysis frames each informant within a cultural milieu and in relation to the computers and composition community. Yet, I also found four potentially overlapping defining features of composition teacher that likely impacted how each responded to the questions in various ways. The first two features were whether one’s education culminated in a PhD in literature or an MFA in creative writing. The second two features were generational, whether one belonged to the Baby Boomer generation or the oft labeled Generation X. In comparing impetus for pedagogy, technology use, and technology attitudes of each informant, it becomes apparent that these features play varying roles in each informant’s responses. In some ways these features confirm certain assumptions, suggesting the importance of context in the formation of pedagogy and technology use. However, as per my phenomenological research focus, and an affirmation of situated practice in which social and cultural forces frame but do not determine individual choices in the classroom, these features are also not totalizing.

In this chapter, as I consider the impetus for pedagogy, technology use, and technology attitudes in relation to the warrants I defined in chapter one, it is also
relevant to consider a distinction that James Gee raises in *Social Linguistics and Literacies*. Gee defines Discourse, with a capital D as a “socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group” (143). As there is no “partial” fluency (155) in a Discourse, one is either an insider, an outsider, or colonized. In the latter case, an individual might attempt to participate in some part of the Discourse (i.e the social network that comprises that Discourse), but does so in a subordinate role as the insiders of that Discourse continually define the individual’s partial fluency as deficient, thus validating the Discourse’s prestige (155). It could be argued that the teachers who did not actively participate in the fields recorded identity were in fact defined by those insiders to maintain their prestige. My informants, with neither degrees in composition nor, for some, a high level of literacy in computers, inhabited a dual-colonized role, placed outside of the margins. On the other hand, each of these teachers exemplified particular ideologies within the profession, suggesting that each was very much a part of the discipline, even if they could not name the most contemporary of theory or discuss the most current technology. These teachers were an average, cross-section of the composition profession. I say this not as a direct evaluation of their abilities, as each explained his or her pedagogy as an engaged and student-centered one, involving technology that he or she was familiar with and appropriate to the moment and assignment. Instead, I mean that each of the informants’ responses exemplified a cultural and ideological majority within the profession. As Berlin writes, “a way of teaching is never innocent. Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed” (Berlin “Rhetoric and
Ideology” 697). The pedagogy described by my informants was infused with an ideology that sought equitable literacy education in personally engaging ways. However, these informants could also be defined by the profession as practitioners of the traditions of composition. Thus, although the distinction – insider, outsider, colonized – can be useful in summarizing a relationship between roles each of my informants played in defining their impetus for pedagogy, technology use and attitudes, and the warrants outlined in Chapter One, I invoke the distinction to further situate my informants in relation to what often represents the composition community – the publication record of the discipline.

**Impetus for pedagogy**

Aaron and Anne revealed that they relied on their own literacy and education experiences, both in direct contrast to and reflective of those experiences. Aaron, who found rebellion and social consequences in his literacy acts, later sought to encourage those same qualities in his students, forgoing heuristic and formula in favor of freewriting and workshopping. As a student, he also remembered how important process theory was to teaching writing, and he fully followed that pedagogy. Aaron considered himself up-to-date with composition theory. As defined in Chapter Four, “Theory sets itself against the normative; its thrust is almost always to defamiliarize what we think we know, to compel us to reconsider that what we assume that we no longer have to worry about” (41). Theory, in this way, names and defines action by complicating common practice. It could be argued that Aaron, in fact, relied on the purpose of theory — even if he could not name specific theories he used — to unseat ideologically embedded heuristics within his pedagogy. Yet, his expectations for his students were in some ways just as confining as the structures he sought to break. In
other words, expecting and encouraging students to disassemble structures that they may see as important to success is itself an ideological expectation for a particular behavior. In contrast, Anne, who played by the rules, even playing school with her sister as a child, emphasized that her education was made better by her “discovering concepts out on [her] own.” Yet, she sought guides and heuristics in her own class for her students. In either case, Aaron and Anne sought the models of pedagogy closest to them and their own experiences. As they both were closer to their experiences as students, they mined and mirrored those experiences. It is difficult to say whether their generation, as a group situated within a particular social and cultural milieu, or their age influenced them the most to rely on their educational experiences. Although, if we consider that Aaron and Anne both grew up in a generation educated by a wider variety of language arts instruction, including theoretical and practical approaches to composition, creative writing, and literature, than did previous generations, the argument could be made that their experiences as teachers reflected their experiences as students more than was the case with Jenna, Lynn and Anna.

Their experiences as students influenced them most at the level of acquisition. As neither Aaron or Anne had much in the way of graduate composition instruction, he a few classes at the MA level and she a composition practicum class as part of her graduate MFA, their experiences for teaching composition hinged on their remembering and utilizing all their educational experiences as students rather than any overt, “taught” knowledge. Neither Aaron nor Anne shared any taught knowledge from their creative writing class, or any class for that matter, partly because they lacked those moments and partly because the classes in which they were taught were most likely focused on craft (McFarland 84). What is problematic in this analysis is that as students
in their creative writing classes, their teachers could have likely ignored any social perspective (Ladner 73), and might have taught distrust of functionalist rhetorics (Lamaros 78; Scholes 161). Though Aaron was aware and found important the social perspective, he was distrustful of functionalist writing. Anne, who did consider functionalist writing, seemed to ignore the social perspective. Though, in both cases, neither might have been aware of it, and thus lacked the “meta-knowledge” (Gee 154) to critique or theorize their practice. Their educations, even at the graduate level, emphasized potentially different literacies so that they relied on acquisition knowledge to a great degree. Thus, when considering motivations and origins of pedagogy, Aaron and Anne, although engaged and student-centered teachers, did not fully belong to the Discourse of composition. An unsympathetic reading might in fact be that the reliance on acquisition as a means to approach the teaching of writing fully situates these informants as colonized – defined in relation to the larger Discourse of composition as lacking training and theoretical and critical insight. Thus, a likely reason for why these informants lacked a great deal of current theoretical understanding, in the case of Aaron, or trust in theory to provide answers, in the case of Anne, could be that the research (i.e. Discourse) that the communities of both composition and computers and writing have engaged in was directed at others in the Discourse, not to those outside or colonized by the Discourse.

In the case of Jenna, Lynn, and Anna, whose educations were in literature, there are similar patterns both in how this later generation relied on their experiences to inform their pedagogy, but also in how they were often not fully a part of the Discourse of composition. However, there are also some important differences. For Jenna, Lynn, and Anna, their routine experiences as teachers held more sway in determining their
pedagogies than did their experiences as students. When a routine failed, each sought a new routine to replace it with (North 37), constantly relying on the individualized classrooms to formulate a pedagogy. The traditions of Jenna, Lynn, and Anna’s schooling were not informed by as rich an approach to literacy and language arts as were Aaron and Anne’s. Additionally, the job market, which fully diversified its approach and ability to provide access with the advent of open admissions around the time each of these informants entered college, became more varied and complicated for each of them. Unable to find jobs in literature, they took jobs in composition instead. They had to rely on their experiences as teachers because they lacked the theory and specific training as graduates, and a diversity of approaches to English as undergraduates. In some ways, these composition teachers were outsiders to the approaches and generations of composition that followed.

What makes any generational argument difficult in this case is that this later generation has defined contemporary composition. Though the common perception had been that “anyone could teach comp” (Lloyd-Jones 491), that there were “no professional teachers of writing” (North preface), by the 1970s, graduate programs and research agendas began to materialize (see Hillocks). The source of these programs were those in English and other fields who needed answers to the problems of teaching writing to what appeared to be an under-prepared “new” generation of college students. Jenna, Lynn, and Anna, were under the same limits and possibilities for their future careers as these early compositionists, but instead elected to fully render themselves as practitioners outside the debates that have defined the Discourse of composition, even though they continued to work in the discipline. This reminder of the history of contemporary composition is relevant in this summary not only to argue that
generation, and thus context, is not a strict determination of pedagogy, but that individual agency plays a significant role in the construction of a pedagogy. For some faced with the daunting job of teaching first-year composition (FYC) without a history of scholarship and models to rely on, the answer was research and scholarship, and thus the professionalization of the field; for others, it was the practical experience of working with students day in and day out. Though in Chapter Four, I raised the possibility that the choice to not enter the conversations of the field could have been a result of a perception that such teaching was transient in nature, and that the informants may have been biding their time until a literature job became available, the continued efforts of my informants to teach composition for decades after the fact strongly suggests that this was not the case. As I stated in Chapter Four, the most apparent impetus for pedagogy, of course, is that each of these informants abandoned theory – literary or otherwise – because it could not answer their immediate questions and needs. Their experiences and continued dedication to their students was able to answer these questions.

However, because of the literature and creative writing split, it could also be argued that the informants educated within literature relied on their own experience more as a result of their disciplinary identity. The creative writing MFAs surveyed here—though neither recalled graduate education as formative in their pedagogy—were engaged in teaching writing as a process and workshopping student work, giving their student experiences more relevance than the literature people who often wrote (and read) in solitude. Aaron and Anne’s experiences as students prepared them to respond as teachers of writing as different though comparable ways to the decades of teaching experience of Jenna, Lynn and Anna. The limited amount of data makes any larger generalization difficult, though it was not the intention of this study. The most
important point that I can make for my current focus, based on this data, is that the impetus for pedagogy revealed by my informants was based on acquired learning as students and teachers. As often echoed by my informants, such experiences were “what works.”

A final thought about impetus for pedagogy, Discourse, and the traditions of writing instruction. Throughout these analyses, I routinely addressed past theories of writing, earlier works or past approaches to teaching and writing in some ways counter to current or future approaches. In many ways, current composition theory is built on older theories of writing and communication. That each informant maintained certain styles and approaches to teaching since abandoned by contemporary textbooks and theorists suggests a great deal about these past theories, and it may provide some space for future research. Such approaches also demonstrated particular types of comprehension – that each of these teachers had connections to the rich past that is composition. In some ways, all teachers of composition use a bit of Bain, Berlin, and Selfe, just as the education system within which we teach has a bit of Lancaster, Dewey and Freire. I think this is a good thing, and I would hope the instructors surveyed here, if ever they come across this dissertation would recognize that I respect and highly appreciate the work they are doing for their students. As has often been echoed by the field of composition, my mentors, and colleagues, “good teaching is good teaching.” Whether these teachers used computer technologies or not, they were committed positively to the teaching of writing. Although some in the discipline may consider these teachers as less informed than somebody trained as a compositionist, they are — and should be — part of the Discourse of composition and computers and composition.

Technology Use
Although the actual use of supplement, namely presentative, distributive, interactive, communicative, and creative technologies was similar in my informants, their choice to use certain technologies was quite varied. In other words, each informant talked about “presenting” information on the screen or board for a class to watch as a group, but few talked about producing for that presentation technology or interacting with the technology. Similarly, informants shared instances when they used distributive technology, but such use had an end-state of consumption. Although some of the uses of these distributive technologies were theoretically informed (e.g. Jenna’s use of having students contribute readings to the class), there was little talk of turning those distributive technologies into options for student writers to understand how words — their words — could be reified (Ong 119) through distribution outside the classroom setting. Such mainstream use of these technologies confirms arguments made in computers and composition about uncritical use of technologies in which the embedded ideologies of the interface (Selfe and Selfe) and the underlying assumption that technology is somehow neutral or value-free (see Morgall 88) is never questioned. Thus, by invoking the earlier distinction made by Gee regarding the outsider, insider, and colonized in a given Discourse community, the argument could be made that my informants might be seen as colonized by certain technological features controlling their uses of those technologies, and thus closing opportunities for both teacher and student in fully appreciating and understanding how those technologies function on other than the most surface of levels. In other words, the perception might be that technology was using them rather than the other way around. However, in looking at these informants, a further distinction could be made between critical use and critical nonuse.
Aaron and Anne were born into Generation X, a generation immersed almost from birth in the milieu of the computer, whether personal, ubiquitous (e.g. ATM, remote control, calculator), or distributed (e.g. Internet). As Aaron and Anne have witnessed the invention and refinement of countless interfaces to prevent “drowning in information” (Lanham 227), they have also participated in marketplace, technological and end-user critiques of those interfaces. This generation has learned to both turn to communicative technologies like IM or email before the phone (see Yancey), and to presentative technologies like the SmartBoard or LCD Projector before the chalkboard. On one hand, their use of communicative technologies allowed them to interact with students outside the classroom in ways that they were familiar with because they had no model for the behavior in their own educations – thus, Aaron and Anne used these technologies extensively. On the other hand, their educations, which observed televisions added to so many classrooms, also observed how some technologies were rarely used or used in uninventive ways. Nevertheless, this immersion provided Aaron and Anne with a model for education, so that they both presumed TVs, VCRs and DVDs were in the classroom of the future, but did not really consider what those presentation technologies could be used for. As Anne put it, it was her own “block” that prevented her from seeing technology used outside of the traditional use to present information because she only saw such use in the sciences. In either case, they elected to use or not use certain technologies, for the most part, because they understood the limits and possibilities of those technologies as participants outside of their educations.

In contrast were the baby boomer informants, Jenna, Lynn and Anna. There was a continuum of technology use represented in these three informants, which further supports the position that generation plays less of a role in the choice to integrate
technology into the writing classroom. As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, Jenna was reticent about computer technologies, and she used distributive technologies in traditional ways, most likely in ways that she was familiar with. Lynn, on the other hand, used computers and certain creative technologies in ways familiar to her students, what might be considered student-sponsored technology use. Although Lynn was interested in learning more about computers and composition, and she felt the computer was a significant change to literacy practices, her uses of the technologies supported traditional roles, most likely roles she herself was familiar with. Anna, who had utilized everything from MOO spaces to email, to responding to writing via word processor, represented a writing instructor in a fairly technology-rich community college. However, there were no other people she could talk computers and writing with at her campus. Additionally, her use was not determined by the technology-rich context. After all, she chose not to use all the technology provided to her, instead relying on familiar technologies and technologies that provided the greatest amount of access to her and her students. It was her own interest and desires to improve her teaching that provided her the opportunities to use the technology.

Although the generation and age of my informants may have had some influence on their use of technology, this was more a result of familiarity with the technologies of the age. Growing up amid certain technologies influences critique of those technologies (e.g. marking in books, working with computers) just as cultural and social factors contribute to the development and privileging of certain technologies. Additionally, educational experiences are important in forming models for how technology is used. Without seeing the technology in use, and thus, not seeing the impact of the technology on individual educations, those in older generations were not able to see the practical
worth of newer technology. In other words, there was nothing broken in their generation’s education, as each informant was successful by their own standards of literacy, so that significantly changing any of those standards might have seemed unnecessary. Whether their degrees were in literature or creative writing, there seemed little to no effect as to whether technology was used or not used.

What seems to have the largest effect in technology use in the composition classroom is personal agency coupled with a familiarity learning curve. That is, the more familiar one is with a mode of teaching or learning, the more difficult or greater the change required in learning something different. We all generalize based on similar and familiar situations to the point that even single direct contradiction is not great enough to sway us from more established and familiar ways. Thus, the combination of many factors, most precisely technological developments, social and cultural shifts, and individual educational experiences, informed these teachers, but their use or nonuse was, for the most part, a critical response to certain technologies, though not necessarily by the same standards as those of computers and writing. Though their technology use ranged from fully integrated to fully ignored, the informants were not connected to any outside influence such as a workshop or initiative that would require them to consider technology use. In other words, individual agency seems to be the driving factor in the choice to use or not use certain technologies.

Attitudes toward Technology

Though some in the computers and composition community may consider the uses of technology by these informants as uncritical, my informants articulated a wide range of attitudes toward the use of technology. What seemed to be revealed by Aaron and Anne in particular is that the arguments about technology attitudes and the
perception that some are more critical or complex toward technology in the classroom were generated from a generation situated so as to see a particular practice before and after technology significantly impacted it. In other words, for Selfe, Gruber and others, the call to pay attention to the movement and development of technology into our educational and personal lives is directed at their generation – a generation that also is made up of Jenna, Lynn and Anna. This is not to suggest that Aaron and Anne do not need to reflect “critically on the effects that technology might have on the composition classroom” (Selfe and Selfe 497), but that they already have complex and critical internal maps and assessments of the technologies that they grew up with.

I want to be careful here in not generalizing about all those in Aaron and Anne’s generation or those generations that have followed. But I do want to raise the important distinction that negative, positive or critical attitudes toward computers do not equate to those same attitudes toward computers in the composition classroom. Dufflemeyer’s study that looked at the attitudes of teaching assistants and Kirtly’s study that looked at student attitudes both equated familiarity and access as the primary influence to attitudes toward technology – in fact, the experiences shared by all my informants challenges these findings. Aaron with little access to institutionally-sponsored technology found ways to integrate the computer into his pedagogy, and he had a very positive view of technology, but negative view toward how technology could be used in education and his institution in particular. Anne, though she had a great deal of access both growing up and as a writing instructor at her university, and though she had a positive attitude toward certain technologies, had a negative attitude toward technology within the classroom.
Jenna, Lynn, and Anna’s attitudes were more in keeping with the attitudes outlined by Gruber and others. My informants seemed to follow the rhetoric of technology, talking about the promises and potential, but also positioning themselves against or within that potential. What I mean is that, unlike Aaron and Anne who had a multi-layered attitude toward the technology of instruction, Jenna, Lynn and Anna each were very simple in their position. Jenna was negative, or more precisely, reticent. Lynn was positive. Anna was complex.

Aaron and Anna, although of different generations and experiences, were both critical of technology, but both used it extensively in their teaching. Though they had differing amounts of access, they both opened up opportunities to explore technologies they felt were important. Although some traditional uses of technology might have limited the integrated effect of the technology in providing the most equitable and open learning space, they were both aware of the limits and promises of the technology. On the other hand, Anne and Jenna represented defiance toward technology – Anne was resistance to the technology’s move to totalize our experiences and thus she was resistant to too much of any newer technology into her classroom; and Jenna was reticent about contemporary technologies and their effect on her pedagogy. Finally, there was Lynn who represented the rhetorics of technology, an outsider looking in at the possibilities, but denied the resources to fully explore those opportunities due to the nature of her position.

In the case of all my informants, their attitudes toward technology seemed to play varying roles in their introduction to the classroom. Without the distinction, it might be difficult for those in the computers and composition community to consider the uses of technology because in these cases, their desire and motivation to belong to the
Discourse (namely, computers and writing) was absent. Aaron, who attended technology conferences, but never found practical application, and Anna, who was clearly literate in many instructional technologies, but did not consider herself a computers and writing specialist, both held very critical views of technology in the classroom – but both might not be considered fluent in the Discourse because they lacked the opportunity as community college teachers to fully participate in the discussion.

A final note. The attitudes toward technology shared by my informants seemed to influence to a degree what each considered technology relevant to their teaching. Despite the push to have a critical and complex view of technology within the community, the fact remains that computers and writing specialists all privilege certain technologies. To hold a university workshop, travel to participate in a conference, and to devote time and energy to publication with the discipline, even if one might consider their view of technology “critical,” demonstrates a commitment to teaching with newer technologies, and thus a positive attitude as to its effect on the future of writing instruction.

**Generation Gaps / Education Gaps**

The influence of technology at the undergraduate and graduate level seems to have the greatest influence on future technology use, at least inasmuch as my informants were concerned. This partly corresponds to the generation gap of my informants. Marc Prensky defines those of the digital generation who grew up with computers and their associated technologies, most represented by Aaron and Anne in my study, as digital natives. Jenna, Lynn, and Anna, would then be digital immigrants. Prensky writes:
As Digital Immigrants learn – like all immigrants, some better than others – to adapt to their environment, they always retain, to some degree, their “accent,” that is, their foot in the past. The “digital immigrant accent” can be seen in such things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first, or in reading the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach us to use it. Today’s older folk were “socialized” differently from their kids, and are now in the process of learning a new language.

As they came to technology later, in their educational or private lives, their consideration of technology was always influenced by either the promises of what it could do or its alien unfamiliarity. Thus, in the former case, use of newer technologies was not determined by the appearance of that technology in their early educations, as was evident from Anna, and to a greater extent the digital immigrants that founded the computers and composition community, precisely because the promise seemed inspiring to those teachers in adapting the technologies for the classroom. Also in this former case, the generation which had to directly confront these promises with their practice are more concerned with preventing technological determinism (Casaregola 207-8). In the latter case, those who never came to appreciate the promises of these new technologies, never sought to apply the technologies to their classrooms. In the case of Jenna, the promise of the technology was so different than her practice, that she gave up learning more about the technology earlier on. This older generation was socialized to consider the promise of technology, but found little practical use except that which they invoked. This is not to suggest that Jenna and others like her avoid totally computer technology or any new instructional technology for that matter. She
did, after all, rely on word processing to a great degree for her own writing. As a digital immigrant, it may be that she and others of her age group are more selective of the technology they use, but use the technology they select just as much as those younger, as a study on faculty computer use from 1996 found (Rousseau and Rogers 426).

For the “digital natives” in my study, Aaron and Anne, their relationship with technology was far more complex because they grew up immersed in its culture and its effects. As Cuban saw in his analysis of instructional technologies, most such technology progresses through the stages of adoption, promotion, policy, then limited use. However, when the lines between instructional technology and professional or personal technologies were blended, as in the case of the Apple IIe, and its parent company’s “aggressive pursuit of the educational market” (Hawisher et al. 40), the limited use transforms into ubiquity. Although they were most likely presented with the promises of technology, the promises were most likely bound to policy or their eventual ubiquity. Aaron, who was highly critical of the policies of his institution, was more sensitive to these effects, especially as someone who both was distrustful of standardizing moves and aware of the realistic potential of the technology. On the other hand, Anne was distrustful of the ubiquity of technology in education, though she found much worth in the technology in her individual life, because she was successful in her education by following the patterns of the digital immigrants. During our interview, Anne found deep irony in her love of technology but dissatisfaction with educational technology, and one can only assume this was partly a response to her own, traditional education that lacked models for use.

Interestingly enough, there was little difference in the responses to classroom practice based on the informants’ educational backgrounds, namely literature or
creative writing. This is not to suggest there were no differences, as there were. I did address some possible intersects in chapters Three and Four, including the creative writing’s skepticism toward functionalist rhetorics and social aspects, and literature’s privileging of theory at the expense of practice – all qualities that may be read into the responses of my informants. However, what was most apparent in the differences between these two cohorts were attitudes toward working condition. Aaron and Anne, both educated in creative writing programs, were critical of technology and its use or misuse in their immediate experiences, but they said nothing negative of their working conditions. They both seemed rather content with their workload and their opportunities for personal development outside the classroom. It is true that both referred to the many hours they had to work as part of their position (thus, supporting Haswell’s analysis of composition teachers’ workload), but they did not complain about it as much as Jenna and Lynn. I am not sure I would go as far and classify this discrepancy as wholly a product of educational background, but I think it is the most relevant issue as every one of the literature informants sought jobs in literature one or more times before they settled on composition; Aaron and Anne went straight to the teaching of composition after graduating from their MFA programs.

With little to no graduate education in composition and without access to the growing scholarship on computers and composition, my informant’s approaches to the classroom are difficult to fully determine. Despite FYC as a generally English graduate-student taught course or as taught by low-waged, managed labor, students and teachers are influenced by its practice first and foremost; these practices are also reinforced or forgotten when writing is taught in other departments and other classrooms. When lacking specific theory or scholarship on the teaching of writing with or without
technology, individual attitudes and past experiences can become the most influential means of defining one’s pedagogy with, as demonstrated by my informant’s responses, varying results.

**Paying Attention**

This dissertation project was started to discover the attitudes and uses of technology in the writing classroom by those teachers who did not consider themselves computers and composition specialists. The act of reading my informant’s narratives against the backdrop of composition’s conditions, history, and technological developments was done as a means to reveal to the community of computers and composition how and why those outside the field use technology. My assumptions as an individual who has valued much of the work of the computers and writing community were aligned with many in the field. Thus, I sought to find voices outside the field, and gain an emic perspective as to how they consider instructional technologies. As a computers and writing specialist, I considered relevant Inman’s definition of the cyborg era narratives – “the dynamic synergy of individuals, technologies, and the contexts they share” (14) – because such an approach highlights certain features of teaching activity not as hierarchical or layered but as lateral and concomitant. Inman adds that application within “a cyborg era requires agency and activism” (15). However, the idea of synergy was less often realized in my informants, if we consider synergy as a means to build internal consensus. In other words, my informants revealed that agency played the most significant of roles in the pedagogies they enacted, even as they resisted their own educational backgrounds, their environments, and their generations. The resistance to these forces revealed by my informants segues into the warrants outlined in Chapter One. I hypothesized that the computers and writing community, though
committed to helping all teachers enact a critical, technology-rich pedagogy, might not fully consider the complexity of the contexts, technologies, and individuals because of how they are connected to these forces.

In warrant one, I argued that all supplements are technological in nature, if we define technology as material and rhetorical artifacts that embody a system or method of knowledge making. Technologies, broadly defined, are utilized in classrooms everyday. Moveable desks, chalkboards, air conditioners, and pencil sharpeners, are all technologies that we come to expect or rely upon in our teaching based on our familiarity with them. However, how we use or see used those technologies also represent our conception of the technologies. Consequently, this warrant plays a role in distancing computers and writing specialists from the writing teachers surveyed here. Computers and writing specialists consider certain technologies as supportive of their teaching because they have formulated an approach based on their familiarity with those technologies. Although some may or may not have had exposure to computers in graduate school, most elected to consider the technologies in their own education because they were exposed to their uses. Thus, those in the computers and writing specialty may be critical of certain uses of technologies that they feel comfortable enough with to be able to question. My informants confirmed the hypothesis that it was not technology illiteracy that prevented critical adaptation of computer technologies but a familiarity with certain technologies, and to some extent, the adaptability of those technologies to what the informant considered good teaching. As the baby boomer generation of informants was more representative of those who set the initial agendas in computers and composition, it seems apparent that individual use played the most important step in defining their familiarity. In the Generation X informants, it was their
cultural milieu and their own individual familiarity with the technology. In either case, the technologies most familiar to the participants were the ones enacted in the classroom. Those teachers who rely on creative technologies as part of their pedagogy may not see the usefulness of adding an arbitrary presentation technology. Furthermore, critique of mainstream creative technologies because the critic has more familiarity with the technology can further alienate a teacher when all they want to do is respond to students and their writing – not the critic, and certainly not the technology.

In warrant two, I argued that social and political contexts often privilege some technologies to the detriment of other technologies and that such contexts also lead to the foregrounding, ubiquity and deletion of certain technologies. This warrant also plays a role in distancing computers and writing specialists from compositionists. Though individuals are locked into many competing contexts, my informants revealed that their own agency played the most significant role in determining their use and nonuse of technology. Of course, this is a tricky concept. There were many vestiges of their past educations represented in their teaching. What I want to emphasize, however, is that it was past practice not theory that informed their approaches the most. Thus, there are two relevant facets of this warrant. For one, computers and composition specialists have turned from practice to theory to legitimate their work, and two, they have tended to rely on context-building to enact their theory.

Certain technologies and their contexts have been legitimized within the computers and composition community by theory more than practical experiences and approaches. Originally, there was a long history of practical application in computers and writing research, in which many inside and outside of the community worked to understand what computer technologies were able to do in the composition community.
In fact, a good deal of earlier work encouraging and exploring computer-based pedagogies was written by non-specialists. Richard Gebhardt’s 1983 computer literacy autobiography in *Focus*, or his article on revision in *Journal of Teaching Writing*, John C. Bean’s classroom study at Montana State University of the effect of word-processing, Bill Wresch’s NCTE published *The Computer In Composition Studies*, or Colette A. Daitue’s application of then in vogue cognitive process theory to word-processing, are just a few examples that respond to practical questions and bridge gaps between the technology and the familiarity of their participants. However, in order to legitimate the field of computers and composition and “establish critical, interdisciplinary perspectives” and to inform in a “systematic way our educational practices” (Selfe “Technology” 119), theory became more important than practical application. To be sure, theory can serve the function of questioning our traditions and practices that often should be reflected upon, but it can also set itself up as somehow timeless response to the constant changes that go on around us, and standardize a field with a definable agenda. In fact, the field of computers and composition, once awash with responses to new innovations at the practitioner-level, has now argued for “model resistance” and grounded response (Inman 282) to such innovation. There are occasional books still published in computers and composition that address practical application, such as Sibylle Gruber’s 2000 *Weaving a Virtual Web* and Pamela Takayoshi and Brian Huot’s *Teaching Writing with Computers*. And I am not arguing that such grounded response is a bad thing, or even that all teachers, specialist and non-specialist alike, should not engage in such work. Instead, I am making the argument that the theories often espoused by computers and writing place theory in contrast to practice, and can thus
distance those teachers like Anne, Anna and others who consider theory as somehow disconnected from their experiences.

The second part of the warrant has to do with how computers and writing engage in context building. Computers and composition specialists have often collaborated at many levels toward community or context building as a means to provide education and encouragement to use technology. Hawisher et al. write, “our field has served, at least in part, the function of support group for teachers of writing” (284), and subsequent articles and books have addressed many strategies for designing and maintaining contexts that support computers and composition. Of course, without the agency of one or more computers and composition specialists within a particular context, certain technologies will always remain peripheral. The computers and composition community has often argued that it is important to be involved with institutional planning and implementation of technology in the classroom (D. Selfe 30). Yet these contexts are often unrealistic. As seen in the case of Aaron, his college lacked many computer technology resources, and those he was given were often prone to failure. But assumptions about community colleges are more complicated when we consider Anna whose college, although technology-rich, lacked others who were able to collaborate with her regarding computer technologies.

Furthermore, calls for context building also seek to encourage workshops or technology groups at campuses. However, these contexts often require that their constituents are motivated to be involved. Anne and Jenna were either reticent or resistant to adding certain technologies into their classrooms. Even if a workshop or the most state-of-the-art classroom were set up and supported, Anne and Jenna would most likely find little use for the context. In computers and composition, Ruth Ray and Ellen
Barton have argued that “institutional imperative” to use technology offers “little or no personal authority over the ways technology is used,” and that “institutional interaction” is far more equitable (281). However, without the motivation to interact, and without the imperative to change, there are few instances where context can exert the type of influence that it is assumed to make.

Finally, in warrant three, I argue that despite ideals to the contrary, scholarly communities often sequester their works and days to within their own community, existing as what Richard Rorty might argue is a "quasi-priestly order" (35). Computers and composition specialists have invested their energy into their specialty for many reasons, as is evident from the stories shared in Inman’s *Computers and Writing*. Although early community work helped writing teachers who were students to new technology, later work has, in some ways, led the community away from this role. I do not believe it has ever been the community’s intention to abandon teachers new to technology – instead, it is the nature of academic promotion and legitimization that leaves those in the field without the time to do the work they once did. Even though he is writing about English studies and in particular literature’s “hypercriticism”, Robert Scholes writes, “every move toward greater specialization leads us away from the needs of the majority of our students and drives a larger wedge between our professional lives and our own private needs and concerns” (82). This warrant is relevant for at least two reasons. For one, the community and its research can seem outside the scope of the average writing teacher, and two, it can neglect other communities within the university that teach writing.

Computers and writing, as a field, has moved beyond the bounds of FYC, which has an added effect of moving beyond the bounds of composition in general. Many in
computers and composition, like their fellow specialists in the departments like English from which they came, have since stopped teaching FYC. Such a move is partly the nature of academia. Senior faculty members have roles and responsibilities within their universities that do not allow them as many opportunities to teach FYC, or in other cases, the desire simply is not there. Additionally, the fields of Technical Writing, Communications, Multimedia, Design, and Education have given homes to computers and composition specialists once they have carved out a research agenda and published in the field. For some, this seems a preferable move. As James says in “The Future of Computers and Writing”, “for better or worse, i try to get c&w away from rhet/comp----i think the whole ‘subfield’ thing is really limiting” (Inman 263). Without the models and scholarship of application on integrating MySpace, blogs, or Macromedia Flash into the FYC class, and without the commitment to work within the program to work with teachers to enact their pedagogy with innovative technologies, FYC teachers might not see what the relevance of technology or the community of computers and writing may be. Yet, as computers and compositionists move to teach upper-division technical writing or administer distance education programs, there seems remarkably little talk about computers and writing in disciplines outside the handful of sub-specialties. In other words, there is very little scholarship on computers and science writing, or computers and history writing. On one hand there are sweeping arguments about the medium’s important effects on the message, but on the other hand the arguments only seem to apply to technical writing, as if computers and composition specialists really just wanted to be technical writers.

I outlined all three of the warrants not as a condemnation of computers and composition, or their success in enacting change and providing opportunities for greater
influence at local and national levels. Instead, these warrants are a reminder to every community that technology and context intersect to invite change even as they maintain traditions and established practices. When presented to those in computers and writing, any of the above warrants would probably seem obvious – though, I imagine that many might disagree with my critique of the community’s response. I add these warrants, the arguments of Chapter One, and the summary in this final chapter to emphasize the complex history of composition and its own impetus, action, and attitudes toward change and context. The computer is one of many technologies, bound by theory and practice like the textbook, the chalkboard, and the moveable desk, that have affiliated histories impacting and impacted by the teaching of writing. When I think of writing, I cannot but consider the computer, even though Aaron and Anne, also of my generation consider other, more traditional types of pen, pencil and paper writing. I am bound to thinking of a computer classroom as one of only three designs (see Boirasky), as do others in the discipline (see Klem and Moran; Palmquist et al.), even though Anna talked about the online writing classroom and Anne complained about a laptop classroom. I have difficulty thinking of an English studies graduate program without an application and theory class on computers and composition, even though those in my study, none of whom had a degree in composition or a class on the topic, was able to use technology in interesting — though mostly traditional — ways. These warrants, in light of what my informants revealed, are reminders to the future of computers and composition to consider how all technologies enter social and cultural contexts to change how and what is considered standard or innovative practice.

What Computers and Composition can Learn
The informants in this study integrated the technologies they were comfortable with into the pedagogies that they had practiced or been subject too as students. These results are by no means earth shattering. What has been demonstrated within my informants is that the average writing teacher is stuck amid a series of his or her own educational experiences, the traditions of that education, and his or her own desire to teach writing in a way that appeals to him or her. What is relevant here is the cultural and institutional zeitgeist that has computers and other computerized technologies becoming a part of our educations in totalizing ways. In current teaching practice, as with my informants, writing teachers assume word processed documents, and an understanding of mainstream software. Even though one of my informants had no idea what *Blackboard* was, her students did (and this also suggests a larger institutional commitment to technology that she was not involved in making). However, most teachers of writing, with little variation, will also expect texts that follow long ago standardized though outdated formatting rules, on paper, researched from established sources. Although, computers and composition specialists have argued that the computer has eliminated these features as it has added a series of its own, there is still too little practice to have the type of effect in educational institutions that these technologies have had in business and individual lives. Based on what my informants shared in the current study, I offer the following suggestions:

**Recommendations**

1. If we continue to use technology in our classrooms, we need to model equitable, integrated and innovative use at all educational levels. We need to be more diligent in teaching with and being conscious of technologies ourselves. Workshops and conferences, articles and books, provide nothing but a remote experience to the
composition instructors I surveyed. Even the occasional technology implementation in a textbook is not enough to challenge the decades of tradition embedded in the textbooks and exercises that so often are implemented. Time and time again, my informants kept coming back to their experiences as undergraduates or FYC as models for teaching and “being an academic” (Jenna). Although so many in computers and composition have taken roles outside the teaching of FYC, if we are to expect our commitment to teaching with technology responsibly, we must also recognize the significant impact that FYC has on a student’s literacy practices (Carroll 119-120), and thus continue to teach with newer technologies in these roles.

2. We must continue to work with teachers in FYC to enact their pedagogy in ways that makes these teachers feel more comfortable with the technology. Scholarship in computers and composition on blogs, wikis, or hypermedia will only appeal to those teachers if their pedagogy is considered vis-à-vis these technologies. For example, Jenna, who encouraged her students to bring in readings for the class, might find beneficial the use of a blog as a means to store and link these documents (most of which were coming from the Internet anyway), and even provide students a forum to respond to those readings. A turnkey blog provider such as Blogger could be used and require little effort technical effort from Jenna. Though we may argue about the importance of encouraging multiple literacies (Cope and Kalantzis), remediation (Bolter and Grusin), or multimodal semiotics (Kress), if these theories do not interface with the pedagogies already enacted, then they serve little purpose to the teachers involved. Just as any writing class cannot engage every theory or practice, those in computers and composition should work with teachers to find the most relevant technologies to a given approach to teaching.
3. We need to continue to look to other specialties and disciplines for how writing is practiced and can be or has been influenced by the introduction of newer technologies and literacies. In addition to paying attention to FYC teachers, we also need to look beyond composition and English, and in some cases beyond the university to how literacy and technology interface. This recommendation may seem unrelated to this study’s findings on first glance, but considering that none of my informants came from a composition graduate program, and also considering that the future of composition instruction may involve more than composition graduates as programs develop into technical, professional and digital communication, it seems relevant that we should pay attention to the ways in which technology and writing are enacted in other fields. This same call was echoed in 1996 by Hawisher et al. (286), and yet little has been seen. Work like Hawisher and Selfe’s collection of 350 techno-literacy autobiographies, twenty of which they share in Literate Lives, although relatively new, is one example of the type of work that should be continued.

4. Computers and writing teachers need to share lore, share handouts, and share assignments. I know this sounds simple enough, but as computers and composition has increased in the complexity of its arguments and practices, it risks what even it warned itself about -- “a loss of perspective that is hard to recapture” (Hawisher et al. 285). Even those informants in my study who maintained they considered theory relied on practice and past experience as primary to their pedagogy. If not in professional forums, where are these experiences disseminated? As we saw in various narratives, my informants relied on textbooks to varying degrees for the teaching ideas. As North argues, textbooks are the “most visible and public” feature of lore (30), and thus, more assignments and examples of technology use should be included in these forums. To be
sure, contemporary textbooks often address certain technologies. However, because textbooks represent established practice, and as computer technology has yet to establish itself as integral or important to literacy practices, these technology features are relegated in readers, rhetorics, and handbooks to a technology section, or even external to the book as a CD-ROM. These sources often do not present the component as integrated to any larger assignment or goal. This is not an argument for technology textbooks, or CD-ROM textbooks as these are likely to only be used by those in the computers and writing community. Instead, assignments and exercises that take into account computer technologies as a normal part of the textbook should be designed. There may be resistance to such additions, especially as both computers and writing specialists and traditionalists may consider writing textbooks as somehow disconnected from each other – however, as seen from my informants, textbooks provide options for writing teachers that they may not have received from their educational backgrounds.

5. Despite all that has been outlined, more work needs to focus on adding technology components to English and composition graduate programs. Although single technology practice and theory classes are added to curriculums, the diversity of the curriculums also might benefit from a diversity of technology integration. The informants in my study were not degreed in rhetoric or composition, but they nevertheless had a variety of graduate classes in English. If technology components were introduced into those classes, maybe my informants would have had a better model from which to base their own theories of technology and literacy upon. I respect the teachers I surveyed here, but I also would encourage more programs to consider the realities of the job market and work to better prepare those in English studies for work outside whatever specialty they may hold.
6. Finally, we need to be more open to work about technology and literacy from non-specialists. So many may feel alienated about arguments toward open source or remix culture when what they really want is a means to respond to student writing using tools that the students will mostly be expected to use when they graduate. This last recommendation is, in relation to my informants, a little tricky just because in every instance each sought out what worked for him or her, and had little incentive to publish or participate outside his or her immediate community. However, the community of computers and writing might consider actively soliciting work from those at the periphery as a means of encouraging more reflective practice.

Limitations and Suggestions

It is difficult to make many generalizations due to the diversity of experiences and difference in generations of the informants in my study. Whatever limitations are embedded in this diversity also provide this study with a great amount of detail in considering future work in this area. A possible concern for the current study could be raised due to the mediated means that informant data was collected. As I argued in Chapter Two, the eventual impact that the various forums in which I collected informant data had little apparent effect. Even those who were resistant to technology and claimed to have little experience emailed me many times using attachments in multiple formats. This section continues by outlining two very important limitations to the study and providing some options for future research that can address these and other concerns.

The first important limitation to my study is the small number of subjects coupled with the diversity of their backgrounds. The intentions of the study were to gain some insight into uses of technology in the composition classroom outside the computers and writing community, so the initial solicitation did not seek to limit the
potential informants outside their association with the computers and writing community and the amount of teaching experience they had. Although I was aware that many who teach composition do not have their degree in composition, I was surprised that none of the informants that I participated had composition MAs or PhDs. The participants were diverse in their backgrounds of literature and creative writing, so that they were difficult to compare. A study that focused on just creative writing MFAs or literature PhDs and their use of technology might provide more focused analyses and recommendations, just as a study that looked mainly within generations might produce the same focus. The current study found more generational differences in attitudes toward technology than actual theoretical or pedagogical differences, as Aaron and Anne were just as likely to ignore theory and privilege practice as were Jenna, Lynn and Anna. Further research that focused on just MFAs or literature PhDs, or even included composition PhDs might provide more comparable similarities or differences, and thus provide more options for understanding technology and literacy for those who teach in particular graduate programs. Another possibility would be to revise the questions into a survey to collect more quantitative data, which could then be used to generalize particular categories (e.g. education, generation, amount of composition education, experiences with technology) that would then be used to construct a more individualized case-study approach with ten or so subjects.

The other important limitation is the lack of teaching observation. So much of our ideology, technology use, is wrapped up in our educational background and experiences, and the questions that I asked were to address these embedded experiences. However, in situations in which the only data is informant-provided, it is so often the case that perceptions and attitudes do not provide the full story. For
example, in the case of Aaron, he said that he used TVs and VCRs in class, but such technology use has many assumptions associated with it. In fact, I have rarely seen a teacher show a video or movie in class in a way that would challenge such assumptions. But what if in his actual practice, he did? So many of the questions about textbooks, computers, and handouts that were asked, ended with the informant saying they “used” the technology; however, as Cuban demonstrated Oversold & Underused, teacher “use” can mean many different and inventive things (e.g. the teacher who used the overhead projector as a spotlight, 68). A case-study approach that worked with two or three teachers and their attitudes and experiences with technology, and also observed how they actually “used” the technology might provide another way to read this topic.

**Final Thoughts**

The diversity of the students who enter the composition classroom is matched in almost equal diversity by those who teach it. However, despite variation in backgrounds and attitudes, the actual classroom practice, at least at the limits of the current study, is rather similar and in each case directed at providing an equitable and student-centered literacy education. Uncovering the source of this diversity is as problematic as uncovering the source of these remarkable similarities. The current study is, in some ways, a snapshot of the many complex connections between traditions, innovation, and individual’s often idiosyncratic attempts to teach, learn and communicate. I am rather intrigued that so many approach the teaching of writing in the ways they do, and I wonder about a future of composition that might overly specialize or divide itself in to many places.

To be sure, composition should be taught by those invested in the teaching of writing enough to participate in the larger conversation of the discipline, and they
should have working conditions that provide them with the opportunities to realize their pedagogy and research desires. I think that English studies has a responsibility to do more than provide a practicum or introduction to composition in those specialties outside composition, and also to provide options for integrating technologies, past and future into their curriculums. Technology, whether narrowly or broadly defined has provided many opportunities to strengthen many approaches to research and pedagogy, and we should encourage those who teach and are taught in university settings to consider the implications of the next technology into the writing classroom. But I also want to add that conservative or critical approaches can sometimes prevent innovation that has so often kept our courses and approaches fresh not only in our lives, but in the lives of our students. If nothing else, I want to emphasize from my study that teachers outside the computers and writing community do pay attention to technology, whether pedagogy or the silicon and paper on which it is inscribed, but in ways that they have immediate experience with – to invite innovation into composition pedagogy is to influence how students and teachers will consider the role of technology in their literacy practices now and in the future.
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I would like to thank you once again for agreeing to this interview. As you have consented to, I will be recording this interview for analysis and ease of transcription. Is this satisfactory?

My research in rhetoric and composition is looking at various teaching materials and supplements used in the teaching of writing. While I will be asking you a number of questions about your teaching experiences, please feel welcome to talk about your teaching outside of these questions.

1. Is there a name you would prefer to be called within my research when the study is published? As a reminder, I will keep your identity confidential at all times unless you specifically request identification.

2. How old are you?

3. How long have you taught at the college or university level?
   a. How long have you taught writing at the college or university level?

4. Could you describe why you originally became interested in teaching writing?
   a. Did you have a teacher that inspired you to become a teacher or writing teacher?
   b. Did you read scholarship or research that inspired you?
   c. Were there social or economical factors that led you to become a teacher?

5. Before becoming a writing teacher, what kind of student were you?
   a. Homework/study habits?
   b. Reading/writing habits?

6. Could you describe some of your earliest school memories that are related to writing or literacy?
   a. What did you read?
   b. What kinds of writing did you do?
   c. What kinds of work did you do?

7. When you went to college, did you go straight out of high school or did you take any time off or breaks? Did you take any time off or breaks when you were working on your college degree(s)?

8. When did you graduate from college? What was your degree in? What was your initial research focus?

9. When you were in college, what kinds of writing classes did you take, if any? Do you remember any of the assignments you were given?

10. Did you use a textbook in your college writing class?
    a. Was the textbook assigned?
    b. Do you still have your college writing textbook?
    b. What do you remember about the textbook?

11. Were you given copies of materials that were mimeographed, Xeroxed, computer-distributed?
    a. Do you still have any copies of those handouts?
    b. What do you remember about these handouts?
12. Thinking broadly about the materials, handouts, textbooks, articles, do you still use any of the materials you were given as a student in your writing? Do you still use these materials in your teaching?

13. What kinds of teaching materials do you use today?
   a. Do you require a handbook (i.e. grammar and style information)?
   b. Do you assign a reader (i.e. a collection of essays)?
   c. Do you require a rhetoric (i.e. modes, writing strategies, writing advice)?
   d. Do you provide students with handouts with assignments?
   e. Do you provide handouts with writing strategies or advice?
   f. Do you provide students with grammar or style rules?

14. What motivates you to use the materials that you do in your classroom?

15. Could you take a moment to talk a bit about your teaching? How would you describe your pedagogy (i.e. your approach/philosophy of teaching)?

16. Has your pedagogy changed since you began teaching?

17. What things have had the largest influence or have encouraged you to change your pedagogy the most?
   a. Do you read academic journals?
   b. Do you talk much about teaching with colleagues?

18. Are you interested in new teaching technologies, broadly defined (i.e. whiteboards, desks, computers, LCDs, CMS, distance education)

19. Thinking back again to when you were a student in college, do you remember any of the classroom spaces enough to describe them? What were they like?
   a. Were there chalkboards, whiteboards, desks, overheads, film projectors, LCD projectors, computers?
   b. When you were a student, was there any “new” technology that seemed to be valued by some teachers; it doesn’t have to be in the writing classroom.

20. As a college student, were you aware of any different approaches to the teaching of writing than those that you experienced? For example, did you have different writing classes in which the professors seemed to take a differing approach, or did you have classes in other topics that emphasized writing in different ways?

21. How would you describe your interest in computer technology and how it is integrated into a writing classroom?

22. Along a similar line, how would describe your expertise with computer technology?
   a. Do you use a computer for your own writing?
   b. Do you use a computer for research?
   d. Do you use a computer for any distribution of teaching related materials?
   e. Do you use a computer for grading, commenting, or reading student writing?
   f. Do you use a computer for meeting with students in a virtual setting?

23. Could you think for a moment as to whether the materials you use or classroom spaces you teach in, influence how and what you teach. To what extent is your teaching limited or expanded through the use of the materials and classroom space?

24. What do you imagine the writing class of the future would look like, say, ten or twenty years from now?
25. If you could give advice to future writing teachers, what would it be?
26. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your insights and responses to my questions. Along with two other writing professors, your responses will better help me research how materials are used in the writing classroom. My, as well as my advisor's contact information is on the consent form copy, which I gave you. I will gladly provide you a copy of the finished research when my dissertation is complete.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (EMAIL)

I would like to thank you once again for agreeing to this interview. As you have consented to, our email correspondence will be kept confidential.

My research in rhetoric and composition is looking at various teaching materials and supplements used in the teaching of writing. While I will be asking you a number of questions about your teaching experiences, please feel welcome to talk about your teaching outside of these questions.

Each question is numbered and given two spaces after – please do not feel limited or obligated by the space; take as much room as you need to answer the question.

Demographics

1. Is there a name you would prefer to be called within my research when the study is published? As a reminder, I will keep your identity confidential at all times unless you specifically request identification.
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you taught at the college or university level?
4. Could you describe why you originally became interested in teaching writing? In responding, consider whether there was a teacher that inspired you, whether scholarship or research that interested you, or whether there were some other social or economical factors that led you to become a teacher.

Memories as a Student

5. Before becoming a writing teacher, what kind of student were you?
6. Could you describe some of your earliest school memories that are related to writing or literacy? In answering this question, consider the kinds of reading or writing that you remember doing as well as the type of work that appealed to you in school.
7. When you went to college, did you go straight out of high school or did you take any time off or breaks? Did you take any time off or breaks when you were working on your college degree(s)?
8. When did you graduate from college? What was your degree in? What was your initial research focus?
9. When you were in college, what kinds of writing classes did you take, if any? Do you remember any of the assignments you were given?
10. As a student, did you use any textbook in your college writing class(es)? What do you remember most about these textbooks? Do you still have these textbooks?

11. Do you remember being given any copies of materials that were mimeographed, Xeroxed, computer-distributed for your writing classes? What do you remember about these handouts? Do you still have any copies of those handouts?

12. Thinking back to when you were a student in college, do you remember any of the classroom spaces enough to describe them? What were they like?

13. When you were a student, was there any “new” technology that seemed to be valued by some teachers; it doesn’t have to be in the writing classroom.

14. As a college student, were you aware of any different approaches to the teaching of writing than those that you experienced? For example, did you have different writing classes in which the professors seemed to take a different approach, or did you have classes in other topics that emphasized writing in different ways?

Thoughts as a Teacher

15. Thinking broadly about the materials, handouts, textbooks, articles, do you still use any of the materials you were given as a student in your writing currently? Do you still use these materials in your teaching?

16. What kinds of teaching materials do you use today? Consider a broad definition of materials here (e.g. handbook (i.e. grammar and style information), reader (i.e. a collection of essays), rhetoric (i.e. modes, writing strategies, writing advice), handouts with assignments, handouts with writing strategies or advice, grammar or style rules).

17. What motivates you to use the materials that you do in your classroom?

18. Could you take a moment to talk a bit about your teaching? How would you describe your pedagogy (i.e. your approach/philosophy of teaching)?

19. Has your pedagogy changed since you began teaching?

20. What things have had the largest influence or have encouraged you to change your pedagogy the most?

21. Are you interested in newer teaching technologies, broadly defined (e.g. computer classrooms, LCDs, Content Management Systems such as WebCT or Blackboard, distance education)? In considering your interest, what appeals or doesn’t appeal to you about these newer technologies?

22. Do you consider yourself a computers and writing specialist?
23. What is your opinion on the current push to technologize the writing classroom and the university setting?

24. How would describe your expertise with computer technology? In answering this question, reflect a bit on your own uses of a computer for your own writing and research, as well as a using computer technology to distribute materials to students or interact with students?

25. Could you think for a moment as to whether the materials you use or classroom spaces you teach in, influence how and what you teach. To what extent is your teaching limited or expanded through the use of the materials and classroom space?

26. What do you imagine the writing class of the future would look like, say, ten or twenty years from now?

27. If you could give advice to future writing teachers, what would it be?

Thank you for your insights and responses to my questions. Along with other writing professors, your responses will better help me research how materials are used in the writing classroom. My, as well as my advisor’s contact information is on the consent form. If you are interested, I will gladly provide you a copy of the finished research when my dissertation is complete.
APPENDIX C

CONSENT LETTER

Dear Writing Instructor,

I am currently researching the teaching of writing at the university and college level for the purpose of my Ph.D. dissertation in English at Bowling Green State University. Specifically, I am researching how professors use teaching materials in the writing classroom. In support of this dissertation research, I am seeking three volunteers to participate in an hour-long, one-on-one interview that I will conduct. This interview will be recorded via audio, video, or electronic means. The interview will be conducted within the next year and can be scheduled for a time and day that is convenient for you. The questions I will ask are about your teaching experiences at the university or college level – the results will help teachers consider the use of teaching supplements and materials in the future.

As a participant in this interview, your identity will be kept completely confidential. You will get to select the name you want to be referred to in the resulting research. Your identity will not be revealed in any published results unless you specifically request identification. Even though the interview itself and transcript will be recorded on video or audio, it will be kept in a protected location. The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

I hope you consider this request for participation. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at the below address, or my advisor, Kristine Blair, (419) 372-3088 (kblair@bgsu.egsu.edu). You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study.

Sincerely,
Richard Colby
rro199@bgnet.bgsu.edu
English, East Hall 318D
Bowling Green State University
(419) 372-0338

Please check box and sign only if you would like to participate:

☐ I, ____________________________, agree to participate in this interview. By signing my name, I am indicating my consent to participate in the study. I have been informed that my answers will be used in a publicly available study, though my identity will remain confidential if I wish. I have also been informed that I can elect to stop the interview or choose not to have my answers recorded at any point during the interview process. Finally, I have been informed that this interview will only ask questions pertaining to my academic experience and university teaching, as well as whatever demographic information the interviewer asks, and I can elect to not answer a question if I wish.

SIGNATURE: ______________________________ DATE: ______________________________

TIMES I AM AVAILABLE: ___________________________________________________________
PARTICIPANT SOLICITATION EMAIL

Dear __________,

I’m currently working on my dissertation at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, and I am in need of some experienced instructors to answer a series of questions in an interview format. I’ve appended the required Human Subjects Review Board approved permission form to this letter with the full scope of what would be required of you. To recap, I’m only asking for an hour of your time in which to interview you. I have permission to interview you online via email or instant messenger.

If you are interested, please reply to this email by September 15. When you reply, I will contact you further with details about the interview and how you can respond to the formal permission form I have appended to this email. If I have not heard from you by September 15, I will consider that you are not interested in participating. If you are not interested and would like to notify me sooner than September 15, please feel free to reply and let me know.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Richard Colby