Disciplining New Media: Rhetoric and Composition’s Disciplinary Development through the Case of New Media, 2000-2010

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by

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Chapter 1

A Case of “New Media” in the Disciplinary Development of Rhetoric and Composition

Introduction

In her article, “Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention,” Selfe (1997) develops an argument that first appeared in her 1997 Chair’s Address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). She argues rhetoric and compositionists have “relegated these technologies [computers, digital networks, and related topics] into the background of our professional lives” (p. 413). She goes on to suggest, “Allowing ourselves the luxury of ignoring technology, however, is not only misguided at the end of the 20th century, it is dangerously shortsighted” (p. 414) and “As composition teachers, deciding whether or not to use technology in our classes is simply not the point—we have to pay attention to technology” (p. 415, emphasis in original). Finally, Selfe explains just why paying attention to technology is important: “By paying critical attention to lessons about technology, we can re-learn important lessons about literacy” (p. 419, emphasis in original) and thus avoid “participat[ing] unwittingly in the inequitable literacy system” (p. 429). Selfe’s article serves as a catalyst for various discussions about technological issues in rhetoric and composition, especially that of “new media’s” position in the discipline and what incorporating “new media” implies about the field’s status, describing the larger social implications of technology in regards to the Clinton administration’s Getting
America’s Students Ready for the 21st Century and its implications for rhetoric and compositionists, both in the classroom and in the discipline’s professional development.

Later, in 2004, also in a published piece developing out of a CCCC Chair’s Address, Yancey echoed Selfe’s words. In “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key,” Yancey claims,

Never before has the proliferation of writings outside the academy so counterpointed the compositions inside. Never before have the technologies of writing contributed so quickly to the creation of new genres. The consequence of these two factors is the creation of a writing public that, in development and in linkage to technology, parallels the development of a reading public in the 19th century. (2004b, p. 298)

Like Selfe, Yancey relates the status of the field to scholars’ knowledge of “writing” as produced outside the confines of academia. She further focuses Selfe’s points about the relationship between technology and textuality.

In a society saturated by information and information technologies, new media cannot be ignored by the larger university or the larger public. Although rhetoric and composition scholars’ research into new media is recent (covering a forty year span with a more focused fifteen years of recent research), current writing technologies and media are shifting rapidly. Digital technologies are constantly evolving: from typewriters to word processors, we find ourselves currently using tablet computers and apps on smartphones to compose, and such technologies enable us to view more media digitally than ever before. With these shifting means of production and presentation, a historical
study of new media grounds the discipline and subfields, allows a springboard for new directions of research, and sustains energy for the inclusion of these areas of research in the field overall.

Throughout this project, I argue that rhetoric and composition scholars use the term “new media” so widely and so broadly that its meaning is obscured. By examining rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development through the historical trends in which new media is discussed and defined, this project contributes an understanding of the discipline’s development by examining new media’s growth in the field. My research suggests rhetoric and composition is a fluid discipline, often incorporating a variety of terms, theories, and concepts from other disciplines. New media is one such term, but unlike others, new media has no stable disciplinary definition; rather, it’s definition is constantly shifting, making new media an appropriate site for studying the fluctuating knowledge of the discourse community over time. Additionally, because it has the potential to incorporate so many elements, new media represents the current growth of rhetoric and composition as a discipline encompassing a spectrum of interests related to writing. Throughout this chapter, I situate this project in the spectrum of historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition, I describe key ideas related to the project, and I outline the rest of the study through a brief summary of following chapters.

At first glance, tracing new media’s history as a rhetoric and composition subset seems imprudent because it is so early in the term’s development. However, new media’s inclusion in rhetoric and composition’s history is not bound by the term “new media” only; other concepts, such as multimodality, contribute to the field’s understanding of
“new media” (as will be discussed further throughout the dissertation). The term “new media” implicates other terms such as multiliteracies, multimodality, and writing technologies. In this project, I trace new media’s incorporation in rhetoric and composition as well as its use in the discipline. New media’s history in rhetoric and composition reflects the history of the discipline.

As Connors (1997) shows, disciplinary histories allow outsiders to understand the discipline. By articulating how these specific areas of study (new media and its predecessor concepts of composing in varied modalities such as presentation and document design, visual rhetoric and argument construction, and other written texts that combine modes of communication) became linked with the field of rhetoric and composition, the ideas can be concretely understood as a part of the field. This is a process of legitimation. As Selfe (2009) and Lunsford (2006) call for an expansion of our understanding of multimodality (defined below), others still question the need to embrace multimodality at all (as noted in WIDE, 2005). With the lack of agreement on a definition of new media (Wysocki et. al., 2004), the problem of including new media as a part of rhetoric and composition is exacerbated. By understanding when and how new media emerged from other concepts important to rhetoric and composition, new media can be embraced as a purposeful concept for research in the field.

Although various histories of the field have been written (Connors, 1997; Berlin, 1987; Russell, 2006; Enos, 2002; Lunsford; 2006), the present study traces the discipline’s growth from the case of “new media.” Rather than simply investigating when scholars brought new media into the field’s discussions, I study why and how scholars
brought new media into the discipline. I identify pressing issues in contemporary rhetoric and composition scholarship and the trend towards new media research as a focus in the field’s future. Studying new media allows me to trace contemporary issues in the field. This term is a unique object of study: rhetoric and composition scholars are currently shaping and contributing to “new media’s” position in the discipline’s literature. While the field has grown to encompass several subfields, scholars have brought certain ideas and concepts under the purview of the overarching discipline. Because of the term’s relative newness and the increasing attention scholars are giving to new media texts, this project seeks, in part, to address Birr Moje’s (2009) call for “an archaeological expedition to excavate and explicate several necessary distinctions in the study of new and multiple media and literacies” (p. 349). Such an archaeological expedition can uncover how scholars in the field discuss issues related to high technological turnover, firmly grounding future scholarship in the field’s guiding theories.

In this chapter, I introduce the project and situate its context. I begin the chapter by situating the project within the needs of the discipline and within a brief survey of historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition. Then, I offer readers a critical discussion of the project’s key terms. As Lauer (2009) suggests:

Coming to more precise definitions and use of these terms [multimedia, multimodal, digital media, new media] must include attention to their histories and the contexts in which they have been used. When faced with a multitude of terms that are often used interchangeably or with little consistency, it may seem desirable to come to more precise definitions of each in an effort to differentiate one from
another and better determine when one term (such as multimedia) should be used over another, similar term (such as multimodal). However, any desire for certainty in term choice may not be entirely within the control of the user. Terms like multimedia and multimodal carry with them histories and contexts that already restrict the ways in which they are understood by audiences and thus make it necessary for people to have the flexibility to use terms that are most appropriate for the context and audience to whom they are being directed, regardless of their precise definitions. (p. 237)

The critical discussions of key terms I provide below are situated within relevant conversations of the field, and I synthesize discussions from rhetoric and composition literature. This synthesis allows me to engage in historical inquiry with a secure foundation on the objects of my study; stemming from solidly articulated definitions, the project can contribute to the field’s larger discussions of historical inquiry and the theories and praxes of new media. After identifying the six key terms (writing, modes/multimodality, discipline, subdisciplines, historical inquiry, and new media) and their definitions, I explain the research questions guiding this project.

**Historical studies in rhetoric and composition**

Numerous texts have been written in regards to the history of rhetoric and composition, and these texts have varied foci. Some historical studies (as will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2) are interested in objects or discourse. Other historical studies, however, focus on ideas or theories in the field. The present study is one such narrative, tracing the development of “new media” over the past ten years of
rhetoric and composition’s history. In regards to historical inquiries of rhetoric and composition, tracing a concept or theory over time is not a new study. Various studies have examined a wide array of concepts and theories, from the rise of written discourse as a mode of disciplinary development and educational instruction, to the types of texts taught in first-year composition courses. All of these ideas have been traced across time as a means of understanding the growth of the discipline. Throughout this section, I critically examine studies that have traced concepts across time beginning with rhetoric and composition historiography, moving to the history of rhetoric and composition as a discipline, and concluding with a review of scholarship tracing a variety of concepts in the disciplinary literature. I situate my research within this history of rhetoric and composition historical inquiries.

**History of Rhetoric and Composition historiography**

The Ocatlog’s (1988) transcribed discussion, “Politics of Historiography,” enlists the expertise of eight historians in the field: Murphy, Berlin, Connors, Crowley, Enos, Vitanza, Jarratt, and Johnson. A few other voices, such as those of Flower and Swearingen, come into the discussion, though they are not central participants. The text is a transcription of a 1988 *Conference on College Composition and Communication* panel, paired with each participant’s reflections on what was said during the actual panel discussion. Throughout the discussion, the historians offer their perspectives on the status of historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition.

Some scholars, such as Berlin, Vitanza, and Jarratt, emphasize the ideological, political nature of historical inquiry in the field, albeit from different perspectives
Crowley and Connors (Octalog, 1988) suggest the histories they write are meant to have a purpose connected to the teaching of writing in contemporary society. Enos and Johnson (Octalog, 1988) explain the necessity of methodology, especially as Johnson argues rhetoric and composition historiographies are both “archaeological and rhetorical [in] nature” (p. 17). At times, the participants’ concepts of historical inquiry in the field overlap; at other times, they diverge significantly. The biggest discrepancy lies between those who suggest the practical aspect of historical inquiry lies in pedagogy and those who suggest the practical aspect lies in revisionist histories that work to reclaim obscured voices. The participants also engage in interesting discussions about the status of the discipline—whether the discipline is a 2,500 year-old discipline or whether it is a 25-35 year-old discipline. Throughout their discussion and reflections, the participants do not come to a consensus on what historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition is or should be, but each author describes the political nature of engaging in historical inquiry and the writing of histories from her or his perspective.

Emphasizing even more discrepancies in rhetoric and composition historiography, Crowley (1994) presents an historical analysis of exemplar historical studies in the field. Crowley argues rhetoric and composition historians have presented both essentialist and constructivist histories of the field. Her text, “Let Me Get This Straight,” traces the ways in which rhetoric and composition historians write about the history of the field (including objects and concepts as well as the field’s overall growth and development). After presenting a brief survey of historiographies published between 1982-1991,
Crowley delves further into the overarching concerns of the studies she surveys. Thus, Crowley’s piece traces the growth of historical inquiry in the field’s recent scholarship.¹

Crowley (1994) further suggests there are distinct discrepancies in how rhetoric and composition scholars approach historical inquiry. She argues essentialist historical studies are one distinct thread in the history of writing historical inquiries and constructivist historical studies are another. Essentialist historical studies, she argues, are those whose authors “assume that [the] fundamental terms [of the inquiry] are stable linguistic (ontological?) categories that remain relatively unchanged over time or through space” (p. 9). She cites Murray’s *Short History* (1990) as an example of such an essentialist historical study, suggesting the cover art, “which shows a river (of time?) connecting an Egyptian pyramid to a contemporary student writing desk,” (p. 9) essentializes the term “writing instruction,” suggesting the term’s stability across both space and time. Essentialist historiographies also privilege the writing of histories, implying history itself is static and/or transcendent; some go so far as to cite certain time periods as the field’s golden ages: time periods where rhetoric is pure or celebrated.

In contrast with essentialist historical studies, Crowley (1994) argues constructivist historical studies are those which “do not assume that human nature has remained stable across time, nor do they assume that linguistic or cultural categories represent natural, transhistorical realities” (p. 10). Constructivist historical studies, then, take into account ideologies and contexts—both those shaping the time period or object being studied as well as those shaping the researcher and her approach to the data.

¹ I say “recent scholarship” because the texts she surveys are within the decade leading up to her piece’s publication. The scholarship was recent, then, at the time her piece was published, although it is now two to three decades old.
uncovered. Crowley argues, however, “rhetoricians have produced more programs for constructionist historical studies than constructionist histories” (p. 11). Crowley seems to favor constructionist historiographies, but her own brief historical study demonstrates both types are present in histories of the field.

A small portion of my study seeks to understand rhetoric and composition histories and contribute to discussions of historical inquiry in the field. Both the Octalog’s (1988) and Crowley’s (1994) discussions of historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition contribute to my understanding of how scholars in the discipline have studied history. I seek to study the history of rhetoric and composition through the lens of “new media” in a balanced, meticulous manner. In Chapter 2, I argue historical inquiries and their methods must continue to be discussed.

**Disciplinary histories**

Crowley’s (1989) “Linguistics and Composition Instruction: 1950-1980” is an historical study examining the position of “linguistics” within the field of rhetoric and composition, particularly for scholars concerned with composition instruction. Much as my study examines “new media’s” incorporation into rhetoric and composition, Crowley explains various attempts to bring “linguistics” into the field, specifically through the field’s pedagogy and praxis. Crowley identifies those compositionists who are “linguistically inclined” as such compositionists who were willing to use descriptive linguistics as an approach to teaching writing in the composition classroom. Descriptive linguistics also afforded writing teachers a way to avoid demonizing their students’ literate practices (especially those of native English speakers) while teaching students the
structures of the native language. Crowley shows that politics were brought into the discussion, dividing traditional, conservative teachers relying on traditional grammar from descriptive grammarians, who were pigeon-holed as liberal instructors allowing students more control over their writing and usage. Crowley also points out several linguists who argued using linguistics in the writing classroom helped students master writing more efficiently. However, other scholars argued against such claims, showing that linguistics has not been proven as an effective means of teaching writing and that the good results of earlier studies were not methodologically sound—the results could be due to strong teachers rather than strong methods of teaching (i.e. linguistics). This was especially the case for issues of style and sentence structure.

Throughout her analysis of linguistics within rhetoric and composition, Crowley (1989) demonstrates that the study of linguistics was brought into composition along traditional tropes associated with composition instructors: conservative authoritarians (grammarians and those who would not utilize linguistics) versus liberal student-liberators (those who saw linguistics as a helpful science for their students). Crowley insists linguistics’ staying power within the discipline has more to do with learning to see student writing “as instances of language in real use rather than as samples of their [students’] ineptitude with written discourse” (p. 501). According to Crowley, seeing students’ writings as a starting place for writing instruction rather than an example of illiteracy is the biggest contribution linguistics has had for composition instruction. Her tracing of the concept shows both the rise and fall of linguistics within the field as well as linguistics’ ultimate contributions to writing instruction.
Tracing the development of concepts across the discipline can be done as Crowley (1989) had done: by carefully tracing the concept backward through scholarly research and other texts. Another way the development of concepts can be traced is by examining particular avenues for disseminating scholarship about those ideas. Berkenkotter (1990) traces the history of reader response and related theories in English studies by examining the history of *Reader*. She describes the history of *Reader* from newsletter to peer-reviewed journal in “Evolution of a Scholarly Forum: Reader, 1977-1988.” At the beginning of her inquiry, Berkenkotter explains her use of “case study techniques combined with textual and linguistic analysis of the various issues” to trace the growth and development of the journal (p. 192-193). Berkenkotter identifies “three distinct periods” (p. 194) of growth and change for the forum, each characterized by the features and appearance of the journal and by the editors who had control over the journal.

The first distinct period of the journal is demarcated by an informal discourse and a wide array of scholarly and pedagogical topics. Issues published during this time period tend to sound more like informal discussions between colleagues than they do journal articles. Berkenkotter argues this is the purpose of the journal in its early stages: as a newsletter, contributors attempt to set themselves aside from the larger disciplinary membership. In establishing a new newsletter and formatting it in a less conventional way, *Reader* establishes a niche apart from that of the larger discipline described by *MLA* (both the conference and related publications). During *Reader*’s second distinct period, a new editor takes over, and the newsletter transforms into more of a journal. There are distinct essays published, and guest editors are invited to work on the newsletter/journal.
Guest editors’ contributions help build a name and a voice for the journal, and both the number of readers and contributors expands. Another new editor and several prominent changes mark the third distinct period of Reader’s history. During the third period, contributors begin to conform with more conventional features of a peer-reviewed journal. For example, in the first distinct period, contributors did not include footnotes or citations. However, by the third period, citations are prominent, and contributors establish a network of ideas connecting to previous published scholarship, solidifying the journal around common readers and interests.

Berkenkotter’s history traces the growth of the discipline (English and literature studies) through the growth and development of this one scholarly journal. She suggests the journal’s various shifts are partially due to the readers of the journal and the community who recognized a need for the journal. Although my study is not an historical study of four journals in the field, I do use journals to help me trace the growth of the discipline (rhetoric and composition studies). Berkenkotter’s study explains how a subfield within literary studies grows over an eleven-year period; rather than tracing the development of a concept within the field, Berkenkotter’s case study explains how disciplinary development is influenced by a field’s forums, including publications.

Wilder (2006) also explores disciplinary development via the lens of a scholarly publication. Wilder’s “‘Into the Laboratories of the University’: A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Publication of the Modern Language Association” is an examination of the beginnings of a discipline as described by the first scholarship meant to build that discipline (literary studies). Wilder rhetorically analyzes the first issue of PMLA,
suggesting what ultimately grounds the discipline are special *topoi* that meet the needs of a particular disciplinary audience. The special *topoi* she describes are “a commonplace of this particular rhetorical situation,” which is the building of a specialized discipline. The two special *topoi* she describes are that of “new field” and “worthwhile.” These two *topoi*, she argues, “create and recreate a community free to move beyond fundamental arguments about the worthwhile nature of its field, so that it can begin the project of building its communal knowledge [to produce] rhetorical insulation [that makes] scientific discourse possible” (p. 175). Wilder describes how the use of such *topoi* demonstrate a growing field, and she uses these *topoi*, among a shared use of multiple stases, to identify an emerging field with a common approach. This common approach, she argues, is evident even in the earliest *PMLA*, although other historians exaggerate the field’s later divergence from studies of philology and pedagogy.

These three studies each examine disciplinary development through the published scholarship of a field. Crowley (1989) looks particularly at how linguistics were discussed within the discipline, causing shifts in the praxis of the discipline. Berkenkotter (1990) and Wilder (2006) demonstrate precedents for reviewing scholarly forums, especially publications. My dissertation contributes to an understanding of disciplinary development not by looking at the development of a particular publication but by examining how scholarly conversations about “new media” develop across publications. Crowley (1989), Berkenkotter (1990), and Wilder (2006) help me contextualize this study as an historical study of the discipline, as I trace the development of the discipline through a particular case, just as they do.
Histories of concepts

While the above discussed scholars have paid particular attention to historical disciplinary developments, some rhetoric and composition historians critically examine histories of concepts within the discipline. Although such studies contribute to discussions of disciplinary development, the main purposes and arguments of these studies are focused on particular concepts instead of the field’s development. Piché (1977), for example, focuses on curricular changes in his “Class and Culture in the Development of the High School English Curriculum, 1880-1900.” Piché’s history examines how class and culture were built into an evolving high school curriculum during the late 19th century and early 20th. He suggests that as industrialization changed the American economy, the middle class also shifted. As the middle class became more diverse, the high school curriculum became an important vehicle for disseminating values to a middle class growing out of a working class background.

Piché suggests, too, that the college movement toward entrance exams focusing on literature rather than composition played a substantial role in shaping the high school curriculum because the curriculum began to work to prepare the middle class to enter colleges. The literature-centered entrance exams were also meant to foster in middle class students a certain understanding of American culture including patriotic values as well as a distinctly American sense of morality. Piché’s study traces the growth of curricula as objects while also tracing the cultural influences and concepts causing curricular shifts. As such, his study offers an interesting look at how concepts are incorporated into different areas (college entrance exams), and then push on other areas of the educational
Similar to Piché’s (1977) article, other historical inquiries further examine composition practices and curricular changes, especially the language used to discuss such changes. In “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” Rose (1985) traces the history of five views of writing instruction in American universities: behaviorism and quantification; writing as a skill; remediation; illiteracy; and the myth of transience. He gives a brief history of each category of thought in regards to writing instruction. These brief histories, though, are brief in that he devotes just a few pages to each; however, his histories of each concept are comprehensive, reaching back to the early 1900s (he even mentions the first-year composition’s predecessor course in Harvard’s 1874 curriculum). Rose’s text is not obviously an historical study, yet he describes the context leading to the rise of each detrimental concept of writing. For example, Rose claims, “a behaviorist approach to writing, one that took its fullest shape in the 1930s […] remains with us vigorously “ (p. 343). He suggests such a behaviorist approach was founded in “a mechanistic paradigm” where scientific efficiency and reasoning was paramount (p. 343). Further, Rose claims the history of writing as a skill is situated within a defense mechanism meant to justify the use of resources in the teaching of writing: “One very successful defense was their characterization of English as a ‘skill’ or ‘tool subject’ that all students had to master in order to achieve in almost any subject” (p. 346).

Remediation, according to Rose (1985), has been used since the 1920s. Although Rose argues how contextual the word “remedial” really is, he describes the history of the
term’s use as one stemming from medical jargon used to diagnose what are currently considered learning disabilities. He claims, “the appeal of medical-remedial language had much to do with its association with scientific objectivity and accuracy—powerful currency in the efficiency-minded 1920s and 30s” (p. 351). Illiteracy, too, is contextual, and Rose claims the university tends to strip the term “illiteracy” from its context, referring to an outdated understanding of autonomous literacy in which people are labeled illiterate if they do not have sixth-grade reading and writing abilities. Finally, Rose describes the history of the myth of transience. He suggests, “Despite the accretion of crisis reports, the belief persists in the American university that if we can just do $x$ or $y$, the problem will be solved […] and higher education will be able to return to its real work” (p. 355). Rose argues this is an ongoing cycle, in which university administrators and faculty recursively define a problem and set out to fix it with no hope of ever really moving forward or fixing the problem.

Writing instruction, according to Rose (1985), has been greatly influenced by five specific concepts of what it means to teach writing. Administrators and faculty have labeled writing instruction as behaviorism and quantification, as skill-based, as remediation, as combatting illiteracy, and as a myth of transience. Rose pushes readers to break away from these terms by understanding their historical context and looking toward the rich complexity of teaching writing to an ever-changing student body.

Related to curricular changes are concepts about what is taught in composition courses. Pennycook (1996) examines this history of how one aspect of teaching writing—especially writing involving research—is balanced in the classroom. He traces the history
of plagiarism as a concept in academic discourse communities in his article, “Borrowing Others’ Words: Text, Ownership, Memory, and Plagiarism.” Pennycook situates his discussion in a foreign classroom in China, where learning and writing from memory are not as conflated with moral issues of plagiarism as Pennycook argues they are in Western society. In his text, Pennycook traces the history of plagiarism through concepts of imagination and authorship. He relies on Kearny’s (1988) identification of “three dominant paradigms: the mimetic (premodern), the productive (modern), and the parodic (postmodern)” (p. 204, emphasis in original). Pennycook suggests notions of productive imagination surfaced during the modern era during the 17th and 18th centuries, when the author became privileged “as an aspect of Western modernity” (p. 205). Additionally, during the modern era, intellectual property rights surfaced, tying imagination to the concept of the author. Pennycook argues this concept of authorship is deconstructed in the postmodern era with a return to a more communal approach to textual constructs, especially “in a new era of electronic intertextuality” (p. 212).

Pennycook (1996) also cites the incongruity of a contemporary adherence to modern ideals of authorship through multiple examples of famous people with famous quotes that have actually been “borrowed” from authors before them (e.g. Roosevelt’s “nothing to fear but fear itself” and even Kennedy’s “ask not what your country can do for you”) (p. 208). Maintaining that plagiarism is a social, cultural construct, Pennycook describes the Westerb need for author/ownership as demonstrative of power relations among academic hierarchies (teacher/student, established/novice scholar, mentor/mentee). He suggests authorship and plagiarism are largely Western cultural constructs developing
out of Western society’s modern era.

Aside from plagiarism, scholars have also studied the histories of using particular types of writing assignments in composition courses. Moskovitz and Kellogg (2005) identify the historic use of science writing in first-year composition courses in their article “Primary Science Communication in the First-Year Writing Course.” They argue that, historically, primary science communication (PSC) has been absent from first-year writing classrooms and textbooks. PSC, according to Moskovitz and Kellogg, refers to “all the relatively formal means of communication by which scientists share their work and ideas with one another (p. 309, emphasis in original). They suggest, “the exclusion of (PSC) has more to do with the disciplinary norms and traditions of composition programs—as well as the backgrounds of compositionists—than with any internal difference between” science texts and humanistic or artistic texts (p. 309). Although PSC has largely been relegated to upper-level WID programs, the authors argue PSC is incorporated into a few well-known first-year writing texts—“Writing in the Arts and Sciences, by Elaine Maimon and colleagues (1981), and the second edition of Charles Bazerman's Informed Writer (1985)” (p. 311). However, the authors also argue that “two decades later, PSC seems still to hold a marginal status within composition readers” (p. 311).

Moskovitz and Kellogg (2005) further review textbooks falling under both WAC and WID categories, with editions ranging from 1981 to 2004, to determine the position of PSC within the discipline’s readers. Along with a discussion of textbooks that do and do not make use of PSC, Moskovitz and Kellogg suggest reasons first-year writing
instructors and program administrators are reluctant to utilize PSC. Although half of their article focuses on arguing for the inclusion of PSC into the first-year writing course, Moskovitz and Kellogg also describe a brief history of the inclusion of PSC in first-year courses. Ultimately, they find the history of writing instruction to be exclusionary, and their argument suggests an inclusion of PSC would benefit first-year students’ writing education.

Another concept rhetoric and composition scholars frequently consider beneficial to composition students—one PSC is often incorporated into—is writing in the disciplines (WID). Kruse (2006) traces the beginning of WID programs and the growth of the writing seminar in interdisciplinary situations in his “The Origins of Writing in the Disciplines: Traditions of Seminar Writing and Humboldtian Ideal of the Research University.” Kruse argues writing in the disciplines and writing-to-learn have long been used as techniques in seminars and seminar-style learning environments. Kruse demonstrates that with the rise of the modern university, oral discourse was replaced with written research. Kruse’s research suggests the seminar paper of higher education is connected first to the creation of scientific journals in 1665, which facilitated the classroom move from oral discourse to written: “this shift from oral to written communication disregarded the old rituals of disputation. It was no longer the talking that mattered but the writing” (p. 337). Kruse further traces the seminar and writing in the disciplines to Friedrich August Wolf, who brought teacher training together with empirical research, emphasizing research instruction.
Wolf required students to present theses that were “the result of [their own original] research” (Kruse, 2006, p. 339). Further, Kruse (2006) suggests Wilhelm von Humboldt, Wolf’s colleague, helped organize the new university system around “the character-building nature of research” (p. 339). With revolutionary leaders such as Wolf and Humboldt at the forefront of university reform, Kruse suggests the regulating of seminars and writing in seminars lead to a more particular focus on writing in the disciplines as a writing-to-learn strategy. However, this writing-to-learn perspective is not the same as would be found in today’s undergraduate programs. Instead, the writing-to-learn agenda Kruse uncovers is much more about indoctrination into a specific scientific field: “now the doctoral student writes [the dissertation] himself and shows that he is not only learning passively, but that he is actively engaged, as a collaborator, in his discipline (Paulsen, 1921, p. 259 as quoted in Kruse, 2006, p. 346).

Kruse (2006) argues the Humboldtian method of indoctrinating new scholars was carried over into the arts and humanities programs that began to develop in the late 19th century. Ultimately, Kruse argues writing-to-learn was used in early German doctoral programs first as a means “of connecting research with teaching, and then proved to be a motor of disciplinary specialization and differentiation” (p. 348). Kruse further argues the first writing-to-learn assignments in seminars were “the kind of activity, which best meets the demands of educating independent, creative researchers, regardless of the discipline to which they belong” (p. 349).

Looking at a different kind of concept related to rhetoric and composition studies, Mattingly (2006) traces the histories of women’s education in the United States. Her
article examines the values and beliefs that led to women’s educational programs. In Mattingly’s (2006) “Uncovering Forgotten Habits: Anti-Catholic Rhetoric and Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Literacy,” the history of women’s education in the United States is traced through the nineteenth century. In some ways, Mattingly’s piece is also an historical study of education in the American educational system. Mattingly begins with the history of convent academies in the United States, suggesting such schools were one of the only sources of education available to women during the early years of the colonies. In fact, Mattingly suggests the convent academies were in some ways the inspiration for similar Protestant schools later created to meet a perceived need for non-Catholic education available to women: “The hostile rhetoric surrounding the academies surfaced less because people questioned the propriety of higher education for women than because many feared that Catholicism […] was gaining a hold on the new republic,” Mattingly argues (p. 162).

In addition to tracing the growth of Catholic women’s academies, Mattingly (2006) traces the availability and degree of educational opportunities convent academies afforded women. She suggests such academies allowed both rich and poor women to pursue an education including far more opportunities than simple home economics. For example, convent academies had a curriculum including sciences such as chemistry and botany and students even studied rhetoric; such academies fostered higher learning for many women and enhanced their literate practices. Mattingly’s text is an historical study focusing on the rise of Catholic women’s academies, but it also demonstrates a history of the concept of women’s education in the United States. As the result of anti-Catholic
rhetoric, women’s education developed in response to growing Catholic convent academies.

Each of the above texts traces specific concepts and constructs through the history of the discipline. From the shifting American high school English curriculum to the position of PSC in first-year writing and the cultural status of plagiarism, the scholars investigate particular concepts at particular moments in the discipline’s history. These texts contribute to a robust understanding of our discipline, acknowledging the roots of our discipline and educational systems (Kruse, 2006; Mattingly, 2006) as well as the ideas discipline members latch onto at particular moments (Rose, 1985; Pennycook, 1996). My dissertation examines the history of one concept, “new media,” during ten years in the discipline’s history, from 2000-2010. As such, my project is a history of a concept. The project contributes to literature about the concepts, theories, and practices of the discipline at particular moments in time.

**Discussion of key terms**

Because many of the terms I use are contested and have diverse connotations, I offer a preliminary critical discussion of key terms that I draw on in this project. The critical discussions I summarize are culled from years of scholarly expertise in the discipline via published scholarship. I offer my own understanding of these terms and the theories and theorists who have influenced my thinking about these terms. Though my discussions do not necessarily reflect a consensus in the field, they draw on contributions
from the discipline, synthesizing these contributions and giving readers a better understanding of this project’s context.

**Writing as a semiotic system of meaning making**

The definition of writing is difficult to pinpoint. Harris (1995) suggests, “the study of writing poses an initial conceptual problem [...]. It is a problem that arises in part from the fact that the term *writing* has come to be applied to such a diverse range of human activities” (p. 12, emphasis in original). When speaking of writing, we often speak of composing, but what do we really mean? Do we mean print-linguistic writing? Graphic design? A variety of modes? A strict array of modes that “count”? I take an expanded notion of what “writing” entails, moving towards the notion of semiotics rather than being confined to the particular print-linguistic demonstration of a particular language. Writing, then, is inscribed communication through various modes (see definition below) in a manner that is meaningful to readers within the intended discourse community. While others in the discipline may prefer discussing “composition,” “composing,” or “design” (Cushman, 2004a, 2004b; Yancey, 2004b; Wysocki, 2008; New London Group, 1996; Ranker, 2007; Selfe, 2009), I prefer the term “writing” to cover all of these terms as well as print-linguistic/textual writing. Without encompassing all of these varied theories (composing in multiple modes, using available designs to communicate with readers, literacy, etc.) composition and rhetoric would not be able to grow, develop, or meet the needs of a literate society in the 21st century. Therefore, I define writing as utilizing modes of communication with the intent to engage members of particular discourse communities.
Most importantly, though, I define writing as a social semiotic system of meaning making. My definition is largely informed by Halliday’s (1978) definition. He suggests a social semiotic system of meaning making is one that involves that we interpret “language within a sociocultural context, in which the culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms—as an information system” (p. 2). In Halliday’s understanding, a variety of texts (speech, texts, discourse, conversation) are part of language as a system through which people make meaning. In this section, I further develop my understanding of Halliday’s (1978) discussion through foundational information from Saussure (1996).

First, I define writing as a social semiotic system of meaning making because it is a social act, taking place in a particular context, and coalescing around a particular social situation. Therefore, writing is a social system. This may seem obvious, but using the term social to describe the semiotic system of writing emphasizes the ways writing is envisioned in a collaborative world where writing is frequently meant to be shared and, as such, must be crafted for particular social groups. Here, I draw on Volosinov’s (1973) theories as described by Cobley (1996): “the linguistic sign is totally shot through with the social world from the outset” (p. 23). Cobley (1996) goes on to explain that studying words without a social dimension leaves out the dynamic nature of writing and communication, that it is “understood in terms of the role played by a speaker and listener” (p. 23). Because writing cannot be stripped of its social context and because writing always occurs as a passing and understanding of signs among collaborators (a speaker and an interlocutor, for example), writing is a social system.
Second, I describe writing as a semiotic system because semiotic systems revolve around signs (signifiers and signifieds) and symbols (Saussure, 1996). Language, as defined by Saussure (1996) is “a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty. [It] is a self-contained whole and a principle of classification” (p. 39). Here, Saussure describes language as a system of meaning making that comes from the need to communicate and from the need to pass on meaning from one individual to another in a social context. He uses a figure to represent how one person conceives of ideas in her brain (signifieds) and communicates those ideas to another individual using “sound-images (signifiers)” (1996, p. 41). This is a reductive way to understand how semiotic systems work, but it is a starting place for this particular study. Saussure (1996) further argues the system is located around speech, but I make the move to define writing as a medium for semiotic transference. Because writing is both a medium of transmitting meaning and a mode of making meaning, it can be understood as a semiotic system. In this project, I understand writing to be a social semiotic system in which signs (signifiers and signifieds) are used to produce meaning making among individuals.

Saussure (1996) also claims “Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing […]. But it is the most important of all these systems” (p. 45). Saussure is not inclined to place writing and language on the same plane. Because writing is a mode of expressing language, though, I see them as too closely related to say one is more important than the other. Language can be expressed in a variety of ways and can be studied through these modes of expression. Because writing
is one method of expressing and utilizing language, I consider it a semiotic system, which
is, according to Saussure (1996), a system of signs that can be studied and described
through analysis. Signs, as I understand them as transmitted via writing, are comprised of
the object being represented, the ways it is represented (through writing, for instance),
and how it is understood by an interlocutor (Chandler, 2002, p. 29).

Harris (1995) also contributes to my understanding of writing as a social semiotic
system of meaning-making. Not only does Harris draw attention to issues of signs,
systems, and temporality, but he particular draws attention to the spatial dimensions of
writing. Understanding the spatial dimension of writing is particularly important for
discussions of writing that lean on and toward discussions of composing and design
(which often happens when rhetoric and composition scholars describe “new media,” as
discussed throughout this dissertation). Harris suggests spatial arrangement is one way
readers and writers communicate via writing. He argues that “the spatial arrangement of
written forms […] provide for the use of space to articulate signification” (p. 46). Harris
further develops a notion of how graphic space is important to producing and
understanding writing: “Every written text needs a graphic space in which to be situated
for purposes of reading. This space may or may not be shared with other signs which are
not forms of writing” (p. 121). Harris also describes the relationship between these “other
signs” to writing as sometimes a part of the “internal syntagmatics of the graphic space”
(p. 121), and they contribute to a reader’s understanding of the meaning being conveyed.
The reader reads both the writing and other signs together in a way that produces a
particular meaning. Additionally, the distribution of signs across the graphic space is also
integral for accurately producing and reading meaning. Such an understanding of writing as a social semiotic system of meaning making relying on graphic space contributes to my understanding of “writing” as well as contemporary discussions of writing within rhetoric and composition scholarship (as discussed throughout this dissertation).

In sum, writing is the system for recognizing, demonstrating, and articulating signs; therefore, it is a semiotic system. For Halliday (1978), language is a system that constitutes and helps construct a culture. Halliday (1978) draws on Saussure’s work, arguing, “language actively symbolizes the social system, representing metaphorically in its patterns of variation the variation that characterizes human culture” (p. 5). Here, Halliday brings language as a semiotic into a social realm, identifying what makes all language—speech, discourse, texts, inscriptions—part of the same social semiotic system. My understanding of writing as a social semiotic stems from Halliday’s (1978) work acknowledging texts as a part of the semiotic system Volosinov (1973) and Saussure (1996) describe. Eco (1984) also describes text and writing as a social semiotic system, going so far as to pose theories on the interpretation of texts, the reproduction of texts, and the roles of interlocutors as readers. Harris’s (1995) emphasis on graphic space is also integral to my understanding of writing. These theories and theorists inform my notion of what writing is in terms of how writing contributes to the social construction of culture as well as how humans understand writing as a part of their cultural representations. A variety of modes, as outlined in the following discussion of modes and multimodality, fit into the construction I describe as “writing.”

**Modes and multimodality**
Ideas about new media stem from ideas of multimodality in the discipline. Some scholars have been calling for a new understanding of composition based on theories of new literacies (that literacies evolve and are ideologically and culturally situated) (New London Group, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Because theories of new literacies rely on theories of multimodality, modes of composition are an integral component of scholarship and practice in rhetoric and composition, especially in the college composition classroom (Selfe, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Selber, 2004; Yancey, 2004b; Hawisher & Selfe, 2002). These crucial concepts of new literacies and multimodality feed into concepts of new media especially because multimodality is intertwined with theories of multiple literacies (New London Group, 1996) and multimedia. New media is a slippery term and has been defined in various ways. Typically, as will be discussed throughout the dissertation, new media has been discussed in terms of multimodal writing and digital media. With such varied discussions, scholars must understand the distinctions between modes, media, and new media. Though these terms are often conflated, they still have distinct attributes.

Multimodality is inextricably linked with multiliteracies, and theories of multiliteracies suggest that literacy is semiotic and is not limited to a print-linguistic mode of social meaning-making. Although some scholars have articulated the power of images over the power of print-linguistics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 1998; Kress, 2000), it is widely held by literacy and writing scholars that varied modes of writing rely on each other in situ to create meaning for audiences (Faigley, 2003; Gee,

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2 “Multiliteracies” is a term coined by the New London Group (also referred to as NLG) in 1996.
2003; Kress, 2003; Cushman, 2004a, 2004b; Yancey, 2004a, 2004b; Hull & Nelson, 2005; McDonagh, Goggin, & Squier, 2005; Shipka, 2005, WIDE, 2005; Lunsford, 2006; Selfe, 2009). Hull and Nelson (2005) offer a close analysis of how multimodality is a rich semiotic construction with multiple layers of literacy working to engage and communicate with readers. Their study looks at different images in concert with other modes (print-linguistic text, music) as well as how one mode (print linguistic text) might function as another (image).

In “Contending with Terms,” Lauer (2009) makes a compelling argument for the use of the term “multimodal” in rhetoric and writing studies. She claims that the emphasis on the word “mode” is crucial for writing studies because it suggests the process of design. The term “media” has more to do with the product of design. When composition scholars take up the term “multimodal” instead of the more frequently used industry term “multimedia,” the emphasis moves away from the end product or means of distribution (the media employed: book, film, website) and onto the process of designing and composing the piece. Faigley (2003) describes the new forms of texts he and his students experiment with as “multimedia essays.” His emphasis in his discussion of the “multimedia essay” is on both process and product, but Faigley’s use of the term “multimedia” may confuse audience members who are more familiar with the term “multimodal.”

Halbritter (2006) takes the distinction between multimodality and multimedia seriously as well. He uses the term “integrated media where you may otherwise expect to read the term multimedia” or multimodal (p. 318). One particular reason for his use of
integrated media is to draw attention to the composing process. He claims integrated media emphasizes “individual modes and senses” as a way to “[spotlight] the process of creating the product more than the product itself” (p. 318). Halbritter’s discussion reiterates rhetoric and composition’s focus on rhetorical modes of construction and the process of crafting a communication while using all available modes—in Halbritter’s case, to integrate those modes into a unified rhetorical construct. In contemporary composition studies, though there is a difference between the term and a reason composition relies heavily on modes instead of media, many composition scholars conflate the two terms, which also causes scholars to conflate the terms “new media” and “multimodality” (for example, Coley & Erickson title their 2009 piece “New Media and Multimodality in Composition Studies,” but there does not seem to be a marked difference between the two terms or clear reasoning for when they’ve chosen one term instead of the other).

In the project that follows, I use “mode” and “media” in a manner similar to Halbritter’s (2006) and Lauer’s (2009). Largely, I use “multimodality” because rhetoric and composition, as a discipline (see below) emphasizes the process rather than the product. When I refer to “multimedia” or media texts, I do so because these are the terms used by the authors in the articles I analyze. Otherwise, I maintain the distinction that multimodal writing is by and large about crafting new materials by utilizing various modes of writing (image, audio, print-linguistic text, video, hypertext). Multimodality leads the field to describe multimedia writing—the final product created after students or other authors have composed using multiple modes or multiple, already-finished media
(such as those media used for video and audio mashups). New media takes the step of creating using various modes and various media a step farther by relying on digitized media specifically, as will be discussed in more depth in Chapters Four and Five.

**Discipline**

Scholarly disciplines are socially constructed. Therefore, what constitutes a discipline is not easily discernible. I argue that rhetoric and composition constitutes a discipline of study. I define what a discipline is, how rhetoric and composition constitutes a specific discipline, and the importance of describing rhetoric and composition as a discipline. I describe how disciplines are understood and how they develop through a sociology of science lens, as disciplines are generally understood to be different sciences (hard, physical, natural, human, or social). After outlining what constitutes a discipline and what types of disciplines exist (particularly in institutions of American higher education), I describe how I define the discipline this study focuses on: rhetoric and composition. I describe what type of discipline rhetoric and composition is as well as how the discipline is an object of my study.

For the purposes of this study, a discipline is an academic community linked by a common object (or set of objects) of study and a method(s) of analysis. The objects might be loosely related (such as language/writing) while the methodology implicated in analysis may also be a set of accepted methodologies (empirical, qualitative, discourse

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3 What constitutes the discipline of rhetoric and composition is not easily discerned, as evidenced by the regularity with which historical studies of rhetoric and composition must self-define and substantiate the discipline as a discipline. Much historical work in rhetoric, composition, and writing studies attempts to set the discipline apart from literature as an area of study worthy of being known as a discipline (Connors, 1991; 1997; 2000; Russell, 2006).
Disciplines are often understood as part of a continuum. MacDonald (2007) explains this continuum as ranging “from compact to diffuse, or from urban to rural” (p. 591-592). She goes on to explain compact disciplines (drawing heavily on Toulmin, 1972) as disciplines with agreed upon scientific problems while diffuse fields generally lack an “agreed-upon set of disciplinary problems” (p. 592). Urban disciplines are more likely to be compact disciplines focusing on one communal research question that a variety of researchers approach through a broad range of research. Similar to cities, urban disciplines concentrate a lot of attention in one area. Rural disciplines, on the other hand, are more closely aligned with diffuse disciplines: the research interests are spread over a broad area just as those people living in a rural area are dispersed across the countryside (MacDonald, 2007). MacDonald particularly understands discipline-building scholarship in terms of rhetoric and composition, but her synthesis of research on the sociology of science and scientific communities clarifies a discussion of disciplinary development. Frequently, hard, physical, and natural sciences are compact, urban disciplines whereby the members of the discipline focus on overarching research questions and objects of study: cancer research, climate patterns, genetic structures, and mechanical structural integrity, for example. Humanities-based and social science disciplines tend to have common interests, yet their research questions and objects of study are markers of diffuse, rural disciplines, including, for example, best teaching practices, stages of cognitive development, global politics, legal theory, and human interaction on a variety of levels.
Although MacDonald and others discuss the place of an overarching research agenda as a discipline-building, unifying factor, the objects and analysis of study are not the only indicators of disciplinary status. A discipline’s status is also dependent on community member recognition. There are two types of community members who have input on whether or not a discipline can be considered a discipline. First, members of the discipline define the objects and analysis of study. In addition to members of the discipline, outsiders also construct and shape a discipline. Members are understood as those people who are invested in the development and evolution of the discipline. For this project, members of the discipline include those who self-identify as members: graduate students, established scholars, and journal editors, for example, make up some of the membership of rhetoric and composition. These members, though, have different levels of membership and respect. Graduate students are novices in the discipline. According to sociology of science scholars Mendelsohn, Weingart, and Whitely (1977), disciplinary knowledge—and thus disciplinary membership—is built with publications and contestations of already-published research. As novices in the field, graduate students are only beginning to learn to do intellectually rigorous work that engages with the rest of the discipline. Until they have been vetted via the process of publication, graduate students are not full members of the discipline. For some, even those who teach subject material relevant to the discipline are not members of the discipline unless they are invested in it via research (both published and ongoing) (Mannheim, 1952; Mendelsohn, Weingart & Whitely, 1977; Pickering, 1990, 1992). Teaching the knowledge of a discipline on an introductory, undergraduate level is not an indicator of membership in that discipline. For
example, a Chaucer scholar may teach First-Year Composition, but she is a literary scholar, not a member of rhetoric and composition as a discipline.

Outside of the discipline, much work has been done in regards to identify how disciplines and disciplinary knowledge are shaped and how they shift. Sociology of science scholars demonstrate how science is comprised of knowledge groups. Science, for sociologists of science, does not only refer to sciences like biology or chemistry. Rather, sociology of science relates to any scientific discipline—any discipline bounded by a group of research questions, researchers, and processes of experimentation (see below). Following this definition, rhetoric and composition—as a scholarly discipline—is a science. According to sociologists of science, disciplines are constantly collecting and rejecting knowledge, with some ideas being prevalent for longer stretches of times than others (Kuhn, 1970). The most interesting aspect of discipline development lies in the tension between the discipline’s members. Sociologists of science argue the members of a discipline may hold similar thoughts, may publish similar pieces, but ultimately, new knowledge (and thus discipline evolution) is created by deconstructing or building upon accepted theories and knowledge (Mannheim, 1952; Pickering, 1990, 1992). The development of the discipline, then, rests on two main things (though other factors come into play; see below): its members and a process of experimentation.

Embedded in the two main umbrella components of a discipline (membership and a process of experimentation) are a multitude of other factors. Members of the discipline may include varying degrees of membership (as noted above) with corresponding degrees of authority within the field. The process of experimentation includes the history of how
the field evolved (published works—from conference abstracts and papers to articles, book chapters, and full books—act as the repository of the process of experimentation from the onset of the discipline to its current incarnation), why it evolved in such a manner, and who acknowledges the experimentation as a valid production of knowledge (the “who” here might include scholarly publications and peer-reviewed journals, the university who funds and makes space for the discipline on campus, or scholars from another discipline who acknowledge scholars from the discipline in question).

Outsiders allow a discipline to be recognized as such by a larger community. For example, biologists see literary scholars and understand that they belong to a particular discipline just as literary scholars recognize the work of biologists as belonging to a discipline. When outsiders identify disciplinary status, they take several factors into account, including the types of scholarly publications produced and whether or not the proposed discipline has a legitimate position within an institution, such as a university (Pickering, 1990, 1992). As Gross (2005) reminds us, “An intellectual identity is a necessary condition for academic status” (p. 34). He posits, “a discipline is characterized by intellectual continuity and coherence” (p. 32). The coherence Gross describes may not be static; that is, according to sociologists of science, core disciplinary foundations can shift over time without the discipline losing a sense of coherence. Outsiders recognize this coherence even as it shifts, affording member status to scholars who adhere to the discipline’s intellectual identity. If the discipline has a strong sense of coherence, it will have a strong intellectual identity recognized by the university. If the university recognizes the discipline as important, it will surely be offered via coursework in a
department, marking it (by outsiders) as a discipline. Some departments that have lost their presences on university campuses may be losing their intellectual identities and thus their status as disciplines, which Gross (2005) notes when describing the contested place of communications departments across the United States. Additionally, a discipline has multiple journals and texts published that contribute to disseminating information about the discipline’s objects of study. As noted below, disciplinary publication venues typically either encompass broad definitions of the discipline or focus on particular subdisciplines.

In this project, I focus on the discipline commonly referred to as rhetoric and composition. Olson (2002) notes, “Since the beginnings of composition as a field, we all have been struggling over how to define it” (p. 30). Swearingen (2002) argues much the same, but she suggests, “The definition […] has been forever changed—but not without continuing, energetic revision and debate” (p. 13). The discipline, rhetoric and composition, has a contested definition—some scholars argue the field is comprised of one thing (praxis) while others explain it is concerned with another (theory) (Swearingen, 2002; Olson, 2002). Because scholars often use slippery words, assuming communal understandings even while those communal understandings do not, in fact, exist within the discussions of the discipline, I make a point to define the discipline. In this study, rhetoric and composition is defined as an intellectual discipline encompassing studies from ancient to modern rhetoric, composition pedagogy and the theory of college composition, the study of how writers write, and the study of situated writing in public, private, and school (both public and private) settings. My definition incorporates Olson’s
(2002) observation that the discipline “value[s] theoretical investigation of a wide range of subjects related to how discourse works” (p. 24). Such a definition allows for breadth and flexibility in the discipline, affording me the ability to trace the discipline’s development in whichever direction it moves. Although my definition may not cover all instances of research contributing to the discipline, it is sufficient for the current project. In the final chapter, I return to this definition in light of the research conducted to determine new media’s role and development in rhetoric and composition studies as well as the implications of that development for the field.

Lauer (1984) suggests rhetoric and composition began as a multidisciplinary field with “theoretical bases” and “modes of inquiry,” encompassing historical forays in classic rhetoric as well as linguistic studies and case studies of literacy (p. 21). She further claims the field “has been seeking warranted consensus about knowledge of written discourse,” which aligns with my own view of the developing and evolving discipline, especially as we incorporate new ideas of “writing” (see my definition above) (p. 22). Although the discipline is a “dappled,” rural, diffuse discipline (Lauer, 1984; MacDonald, 2007), it has central theories and objects of study unifying it. Over time, these objects and theories may change. For example, early handbooks emphasized grammatical correctness, while modern handbooks offer a variety of topics including both the writing process and information about grammatical correctness (Connors, 1983). Although I define the discipline as rhetoric and composition, others may define the discipline in different ways, using different words (such as writing studies). Additionally, word choice becomes slippery as scholars in various subdisciplines may define or discuss their
subdisciplines as “the discipline” (or, perhaps, “the field”). In this project, when I speak about the discipline and use the word “discipline,” I mean the umbrella discipline encompassing rhetoric, composition, and the varied subdisciplines connected to this overarching discipline (please see below for a discussion of subdisciplines).

For a field invested in multidisciplinarity, the objects of studies are often loosely related. We might see in one volume of *College Composition and Communication*, for instance, such topics as digital literacies, assessment, teaching graduate students, and the valuing of master’s degrees (all topics present in the 62\textsuperscript{nd} volume). With such diversity, the objects of study must also be diverse, ranging from limited case studies of a writing-centered master’s program, the courses taught, graduate student writing samples, reflective commentary and think aloud protocols of assessing student writing, utterances/pieces of writing, even literacy narratives and types of digital compositions. My study fits within this relatively flexible set of acceptable objects of study. As an historical account, my objects of study are historical utterances (both extensive and relatively short sections of writing). These particular objects are more tightly constrained for the purposes of this project then the breadth allowed me by the historical objects of study affiliated with research in the field: although I analyze peer reviewed journals as a primary source in this study, there are a variety of other historical objects I might have looked at, including conference proceedings, oral histories, interviews, or I might have even reviewed articles from a larger variety of journals instead of the four I narrowed my search to (as described in chapter two). I define rhetoric and composition more
specifically by focusing on the beliefs and members comprising and shaping the discipline.

To complicate my notion of rhetoric and composition as a discipline, I understand the discipline as a diffuse/rural discipline (as described above) (MacDonald, 2007). Although MacDonald claims diffuse or rural disciplines “tend to lack a generally agreed-upon set of disciplinary problems” while “researchers’ attention is spread more broadly over more problems,” rhetoric and composition still, by definition as a discipline, share an overarching concern (p. 592). The discipline concerns itself with research pertaining to how people/communities use language/communication/writing *in situ*. The research approaches taken to uncover bits of this overarching research concern are diverse, marking the discipline as a diffuse/rural discipline although the end goal remains the same. Other scholars see the discipline as more or less unified in approaching disciplinary concerns. Kaplan (1991), for example, defines the field, saying, “As a profession, rhetoricians and writing teachers have long recognized that the composition curriculum works self-consciously to replicate dominant ideologies but that it can be constructed to resist and form them as well” (p. 12). Kaplan is highlighting central issues of the discipline: rhetoric, pedagogy, a main focus on teaching (composition), as well as the struggle with ideologies in the work of the discipline. With such a diverse way to approach these varied central issues (Kaplan, 1991), rhetoric and composition can be viewed as a rural, diffuse discipline, expanding into many areas related through common underpinnings. The emphasis for scholars like Kaplan rests on instruction and theories of argumentation. For others, the emphasis rests on research done about writing. In this
area, MacDonald, aligning herself with Connors (1997) and Haswell (2005), suggests the discipline has “retreated from those promises” that a social science approach to research might afford the field. However, my understanding of the discipline demonstrates a clear emphasis on social sciences and empirical research whereby scholars investigate the place of writing and composing in context of social communities.

Finally, as noted above, disciplines are understood to be disciplines in large part through the established research and publications of their members. Those disciplines with substantial scholarly outlets have more credence as disciplines and are acknowledged as disciplines across academic institutions. Rhetoric and composition does not lack such scholarly outlets. According to Swearingen (2002), part of knowing when the discipline began to exist as a discipline is evidenced by the types of journals that were created and the information they began publishing. She traces the development of the discipline to emerging Ph.D. programs in well-respected universities as well as the development of journals focusing on issues important to discipline members, citing “College English, JAC, Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Research in the Teaching of English, College Composition and Communication, Written Communication, PRE/TEXT, Rhetoric Review, and related journals” (p. 14). Her list suggest the variety of intellectual pursuits the discipline follows. At the same time, her list identifies the types of scholars who can claim membership in this diverse discipline. Through experimentation (and publication in the journals Swearingen cites, among others), members build, shape, and reconstruct the discipline. This process encompasses the history of the discipline and its publications as well as how the discipline has been understood in larger contexts. These scholarly
publications are a means for the members of the discipline to contribute to the shape of the discipline while giving outsiders a sense of what research questions and objects of study constitute rhetoric and composition as a discipline.

**Subdiscipline**

Subdisciplines are branches of larger disciplines. As such, they are a part of a disciplinary hierarchy. When I describe subdisciplines as being a part of a disciplinary hierarchy, I do not mean to infer that one subdiscipline is more important than another or that the overarching discipline is more important than the subdisciplines comprising the discipline. Instead, we might consider disciplines as tree-shaped hierarchies. The discipline itself creates the structure: it is the roots and the trunk of the tree. Subdisciplines, then, are the branches. These branches are particularly interesting for rural/diffuse disciplines (MacDonald, 2007) as they actually form the substance of the disciplines. The branches demonstrate the varied objects of study and research questions that form the diffuse/rural discipline. As a hierarchy, the subdisciplines only exist because the overarching discipline exists, but without the branches of the discipline-tree, the tree itself would not exist. The subdisciplines contribute to the strength, growth, further development, and evolution of the larger discipline.

Typically, subdisciplines seek to answer more specific research questions and look at specific objects of study. These research questions and objects of study fall under the overarching research agenda of the larger discipline, but members of the subdiscipline focus their research on these questions and objects specifically. According to sociology of science scholar Pickering (1990, 1992), subfields coalesce around the ideas of like-
minded individuals with similar but somewhat unprecedented ideas about their discipline and the knowledge created within the discipline. Subdisciplines do not always hold the same claims of knowledge that the field overall holds. Thus subdisciplines emphasize smaller portions of the discipline. They look at particular objects of study—objects that the rest of the discipline may tolerate or emphasize, as the case may be. For example, political science scholars might study political theory, American politics, or comparative world politics; sociologists may study the results of patriarchy on Western women; geneticists may study human or plant genes depending on their branching research questions.

One indicator of subdisciplines can be found in the section headings of collections purporting to be about composition studies and in section headings of major conferences in composition studies. For example, Bloom’s (2003) collection, Composition in the New Millennium, is broken into multiple categories, some of which speak to certain subdisciplines within the discipline. From the section headings, we see subdisciplines such as history, methodology, pedagogy, and 21st century writing technologies. The writing technologies (also described as computers and writing) section of the book suggests the theme of writing technologies was so prevalent in the conference the collection is based on that it had to be included as a section. The subfield (computers and writing) is based on ideas that stem off from the larger ideas of the discipline but are not necessarily relevant to members of the discourse community who focus their research on other subdisciplines. Typically, new media falls into the purview of the computers and writing subfield (see below).
The conflict between subdisciplines and overarching disciplines holds true for other scientific disciplines as well, and, Pickering (1990, 1992) and Kuhn (1970) argue, subdisciplines sometimes break away to begin new disciplines of their own, which is similar to the beginning of rhetoric and composition as a scholarly undertaking in the American university system. Writing courses in the university were originally the work of literature professors. Rhetoric and composition developed as a result of some literature scholars’ dissatisfaction with the lack of guidance and knowledge about teaching writing. Eventually, an initially small group of people who shared a research question focusing on the concerns of composition instructors banded together, and this group became the catalyst for the growth and development of rhetoric and composition as a discipline in its own right (Olson, 2002). The Conference on College Composition and Communication’s, and, later, the journal College Composition and Communication’s origins reside in the quest for understanding by people originally trained outside the study and teaching of writing. As rhetoric and composition evolved into a discipline, more subdisciplines began to emerge, branching off of the overarching discipline (Russell, 2006). Russell (2006) describes a wide array of subdisciplines now described as falling within the purview of rhetoric and composition, including: mass education, writing assessment, women and composition, writing across the curriculum, classical rhetoric, first-year composition, technology, professionalism, etc. Russell presents these categories (among others) as themes characterizing different areas of study and research in rhetoric and composition’s history. However, scholars frequently specialize and publish scholarship in these
categories, allowing readers to understand them as subdisciplines or concepts and interests that might launch subdisciplines.

With respect to what counts as a discipline or a subdiscipline, not all readers will agree with my argument that rhetoric and composition is a discipline or that computers and writing is a subdiscipline. Some readers may understand rhetoric and composition to be itself a subdiscipline a portion of a larger discipline (i.e., English studies). Thus, they label rhetoric and composition as a subdiscipline. MacDonald (2007), for example, includes the discipline within the department it is taught. She lumps literary studies, rhetoric and composition, and English education, for example, under the overarching category of “English departments.” While she discusses “our irrelevance” and “our own professional identity,” MacDonald does not articulate precisely who she refers to when she writes “our” (p. 587). Instead, she implies the English department is the hub of the discipline. It follows that the various programs subsumed by the English department might be subdisciplines in perspectives similar to MacDonald’s. In her discussion, MacDonald claims to focus on one aspect of the English department: “the field of rhetoric and composition,” which muddles her discussion (p. 587). One problem with MacDonald’s discussion of the discipline, though, is that not all rhetoric and composition scholars or programs/departments reside in English departments. There are plenty of stand-alone rhetoric and composition (or rhetoric and writing) departments in colleges and universities across the United States. Additionally, many rhetoric and composition scholars and research are housed in communications departments. Although the discipline may have begun as a subdiscipline of English (or, more appropriate,
literature/literary studies), the discipline is no longer pinned to the English department. With discussions like MacDonald’s shaping the field (her article appears in *CCC*, which I will later argue is a journal integral to the discipline’s development), disciplines tend to intersect and crossover, making the divisions between various disciplines and subdisciplines difficult to explain or understand.

I do not agree with MacDonald’s diverse description of “our profession.” Although there may be some cross over at conferences such as the *Conference on College Composition and Communication* due to the nature of who teaches college composition courses, the primary research a scholar engages in denotes that scholar’s professional, disciplinary identity. I, for example, do not research literature or literary theory. On the other hand, I explore notions of what it means to write and what it means to teach writing. My research interests diverge from other members of the English department, denoting them as different disciplines, though they have similar and, in fact, intertwined disciplinary histories.

It is not what we teach or our departmental affiliation but what we research and study that identifies our allegiance to specific disciplines or subdisciplines. Our outspoken identification as scholars within these disciplines, bolstered by our research and publications, denotes our disciplinary positioning. Many of my peers and colleagues study literature and literary theory, yet they teach first-year composition. Many of my peers and colleagues study first-year composition, yet they teach literacy theory or specific instances of domain rhetorics. Just because a scholar teaches a particular course

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4 College composition courses are still frequently taught by literature and rhetoric and composition scholars as well as scholars holding M.F.A.s and similar degrees.
does not make the scholar a member of the discipline that is examined throughout the course. The nature of university politics and hiring/course offering needs sees to it that many scholars teach courses comprising content not associated with their areas of specialization, expertise, or interest. Although the present discussion may seem tangential to the larger discussion of subdisciplines, I explain what constitutes the discipline and the subdiscipline through this discussion. Outsiders and insiders may understand the discipline to be something other than what I understand it to be. The ways I understand the discipline and its various subdisciplines color the current project. Understanding the evolution of a concept within a discipline is only possible when that discipline is clearly defined. Without a consistent definition of rhetoric and composition with which to understand this project, the research presented in the following chapters is left open to skepticism (at best) and misunderstanding or outright disagreement (at worst). Because I define rhetoric and composition as a discipline, I am able to look at the subdisciplines contributing to the discipline and, in particular, the discipline’s evolving conceptions of new media. My argument (as fully articulated in Chapters 4 and 5) emphasizes the importance of recognizing rhetoric and composition as a stand-alone discipline while recognizing computers and writing as an incorporated subdiscipline facilitating the evolution of new media within the purview of the overarching discipline.

When I refer to the subdiscipline throughout this project, I refer to computers and writing. This subdiscipline has been described in a variety of ways including computers and composition, writing and technology, and composition and technology. I choose to

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5 Again, literary scholars who teach introduction to rhetoric and composition or first-year composition are not members of the rhetoric and composition disciplinary community.
call the subdiscipline computers and writing so as not to confuse it with *Computers and Composition* (the scholarly journal) throughout the text. Because this project shows how new media has largely been found within computers and writing, this subdiscipline is a secondary focus (with rhetoric and composition being a primary focus). Throughout the project, not only do I trace the development of the discipline, but I also trace the development of computers and writing as a subdiscipline.

There are plenty of scholars who refer to computers and writing as a discipline and identify it as their discipline rather than as a subdiscipline associated with rhetoric and composition. In their introduction to their foundational text, *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies*, Hawisher and Selfe (1991) claim, “With this volume, we seek to identify some of the important questions that scholars, teachers, and researchers in the field of computers and composition must address to develop new perspectives on technology and advance confidently into the twenty-first century” (p. 1, emphasis added). They suggest the volume is comprised of manuscripts that “best represented important issues shaping the profession” and “lead to significant new contributions to the field” (p. 1). With information like this contextualizing their collection, Hawisher and Selfe suggest computers and writing is a discipline in its own right, with a defined membership coalescing around a process of experimentation.

In their earlier collection, *Critical Perspectives on Computers and Composition Instruction*, Hawisher and Selfe (1989) put forth the same argument, suggesting computers and writing is a discipline when they note, “As a profession, we have begun to sort out how writers react to computers as tools and how written communication is
shaped by electronic technology and by those writers who use this technology” (p. 1). Although both discussions emphasize computers and writing as a discipline, the authors are actually tying their notion of the discipline to the larger discipline of rhetoric and composition. For example, in both discussions, Hawisher and Selfe emphasize the profession of teaching composition. In the 1989 publication particularly, they link computers and writing to rhetoric and composition by discussing key concepts in terms of rhetoric and composition: “how writers react,” “how communication is shaped” (p.1). In the 1991 publication, they emphasize teachers who teach composition and use technology to do so. Though both of these texts are dated, their discussion of computers and writing as a discipline hold throughout the history of the specialization. Perhaps because these texts are subdiscipline building texts, they seek to carve out a space for the subdiscipline, largely referring to it as a field or discipline. However, very little recent scholarship has approached the need to define the computers and writing community since Inman’s (2004) *Cyborg Era*.

Although Hawisher and Selfe, as well as other scholars (Slatin, 1998; Condon, 2000; Lang, 2000), may situate computers and writing as a discipline with a particular group of members, computers and writing is inextricably linked with the intellectual identity of rhetoric and composition, dealing with the central issues of writing and the teaching of writing. Therefore, I identify computers and writing as a subdiscipline of rhetoric and composition throughout this project. Inman (2004) is perhaps closer to my own stance as he positioning computers and writing as a community rather than a discipline: “*Computers and Writing: The Cyborg Era* explores the landscape of the
contemporary computers and writing community”; “Chapter 1 defines computers and writing as a community, emphasizing the individuals who interact and do work in the area, rather than the work they do alone” (p. xi). Inman goes on to describe scholars who have identified computers and writing as a field or discipline, as a subfield or subdiscipline, or as a community. He reminds readers, “terms like field, discipline, subfield, subdiscipline, and community are not interchangeable, as they each bring forward distinct values and implications” (p. 2). Inman prefers to describe computers and writing as a community, but because I am interested in the growth of a discipline and the impact subdiscipline have on that growth, I understand computers and writing to be a subdiscipline with particular interests (revolving around writing, instruction, and how both writing and instruction are influenced by writing technologies) tied to the larger discipline I describe as rhetoric and composition. In defining computers and writing as a subdiscipline, I emphasize its “scholarship [and] other knowledge” instead of the “individuals involved in its work,” as Inman would (Inman, 2004, p. 3).

**Historical inquiry**

Typically, social scientists study trends in present day social groups. However, an emphasis on modern social groups does not preclude historical inquiry from the purview of social sciences. When I define this project as an historical inquiry, I do so from a definition of historical inquiry used by historians and rhetoricians/compositionists whose research niche is historical. For example, Connors (1992) suggests historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition centers on presenting awareness, utilizing archival retrieval
processes, and identifying the prejudices of the researcher and society. When conducting historical inquiry, Connors argues that the steps of analysis include external criticism (identifying the primary source as a primary source integral to answering the research questions), internal criticism (identifying the source as accurate, acknowledging its biases, and corroborating factual data from the source), and synthesis of materials (utilizing internal and external criticism to identify a trend and suggest it to the larger audience). Connors’s definition of historical inquiry is based on discussions presented by historians. His description is the basis of my own historical inquiry. Historians Shafter (1969), McDowell (2002), and Gilderhus (2003) all suggest historical research does center ideas put forth by Connors. Stahl and Hartman (2004) also discuss the procedures of historical inquiry in the same manner as Connors (1992), suggesting that Connors’s definitions are integral to how rhetoric and composition studies conducts historical inquiries into the social use of language and writing. Methodological issues are foregrounded in Connors’s work. These methodological issues ground my own work, but I am also interested in utilizing empirical methods for my historical inquiry. Whereas Connors describes examining texts with an eye for trends, I use historical inquiry to examine texts while bringing in rigorous, accountable methods such as content analysis to make my historical inquiry empirically sound.

This study is an empirical study of fringe theories within rhetoric and composition and the dominant theories of that subdiscipline. I maintain the use of the terms “historical inquiry” and “historical study” to describe this project. I base these terms on Connors’s (1992) discussion of historical inquiry, but I move beyond his description. While this
project may not be a typical historical study, it is predicated on the idea that disciplines have histories and that these histories can be examined and analyzed in order to better understand the objects, methodologies, and researchers that comprise a discipline. Therefore, I use the terms “historical study” and “historical inquiry” in reference to my project.

New media

The dissertation itself works to define how the field has defined new media. For my purpose here in providing an overview, however, I note scholars use often conflate “new media” with a variety of others: modes, modalities, multimodality, literacies, multiliteracies, media, and multimedia among them. For example, new media is often used instead of multimedia; although, sometimes multimedia is a more appropriate word choice than new media, as I will show. As I discuss in this dissertation, when distinctions are made among these various related terms, the distinctions are often made based on the types of writing being examined (scholarly, theoretical, practical, pedagogical) and the types of activities being examined (for example, audio essays or artistic mashups on YouTube). For my purposes, throughout this project, I use “new media” to refer to social semiotic iterations distributed and exhibited via digital means (accessed via computers). This definition relies on Manovich’s (2001) five principles of new media as well as current definitions circulating in rhetoric and composition—namely, Wysocki’s and

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6 Such texts might be a variety of things from YouTube videos to texts composed in word processors with the intent of only ever being viewed digitally. They might also include posts on social networking websites, blog posts, even websites designed by students and/or professionals. In this project, I only review a few new media texts (published on Kairos) because the project is not about the texts produced but rather the discipline’s definitions of such texts.
Selfe’s (Wysocki, et. al., 2004) definitions. In chapter four, I identify in detail the definition of new media according to the discipline at large.

I maintain that all new media is digitized semiotic rather than simply types of media or simply texts found online (i.e., websites), as some scholars might suggest. I choose this articulation because it implies the presence of meaning making, the negotiation of creator and audience (as suggested by Wysocki, 2004), varied definitions of texts (image, print-linguistic, sound), and an important emphasis on distribution. As Manovich (2001) demonstrates, there is little that is new about “new media” except for the essential nature of distribution and exhibition. Therefore, following my definition, simply showing an image on a computer screen is not new media. The interplay of a digital image displayed via a screen to convey a particular message negotiated by both creator and audience is, however, new media.

New literacies, multimodality, multimedia, and new media are conflated and contested terms woven together into rhetoric and composition’s evolving disciplinary fabric. This study looks for the scholarly conversations that led rhetoric and composition to include new media studies under its purview. Rhetoric and composition scholarship generally understands multimodal composing to fall under composition’s domain. Different modes of communication—print-linguistic, imagery, aurality, gesture, color, media—all convey nuanced meaning to an audience. Multimodal composing plays a significant, albeit diverse, role in rhetoric and composition’s discussion of new media, creating a need for an historical understanding of how rhetoric and compositionists articulate conceptions of new media.
My study and definition of new media works in part to answer Reid’s (2003) call for an examination of “the historical and technological processes by which new media emerged.” He further claims, “Just as it is important for us to engage in historiographic analysis of rhetoric, so must we understand the history of the media technologies we now employ on a regular basis. Second, we must integrate a critical understanding of technology into our broader theories of writing” (n.p.). By engaging in an historical inquiry aimed at unearthing the field’s concept of new media, I engage in understanding the historical process that brought both new media technologies and theories under the purview of the discipline.

Research questions

An historical examination of rhetoric and composition’s new media scholarship provides an avenue for this dissertation’s overarching conceptual question: how does rhetoric and composition develop as a discipline? Using new media as the site of study, I examine two types of research questions. The first type of research question focuses on the history of scholarly discussions in the field. The second is concerned with definitional problems. As suggested above, there is much slippage of meaning between basic terms (new media, multimodality, multimedia), terms whose definitions are often taken for granted in rhetoric and composition. Defining these terms, tracing their historical meaning, and clarifying distinctions between them is an essential step in understanding their contemporary uses and meanings. Toward that goal, this study begins by investigating:
Question 1: What is the history of “new media” within the discipline of rhetoric and composition?

Sub-questions:

- In what scholarly conversations did “new media” enter rhetoric and composition scholarship?
  - How have scholars framed issues of “new media”?
  - How has that framing of issues contributed to disciplinary development and formation?

Question 2: How do scholars define “new media” in rhetoric and composition’s printed scholarship?

Sub-questions:

- How do scholars in the discipline define “new media” in four scholarly journals?
  - What are the strategic maneuvers scholars make when they invoke definitions of “new media”?
  - How do these maneuvers influence disciplinary development?

To understand how contemporary disciplines develop, I look into the repositories of the discipline’s artifacts most likely to affect the discipline’s growth (peer-reviewed journal articles in the discipline) to examine my object of study: utterances about “new media.” Reviewing these journal articles for such utterances contributes to an historical understanding of how concepts are articulated and acted upon as well as how agents in the discipline shape and articulate critical concepts. I discuss my rationale to use these particular artifacts as opposed to others in the methodology section of Chapter 2.
Importance of the problem

Currently, terms like new media and multimodality are often conflated or misused as more and more literate practices converge and overlap (Lauer, 2009; Alexander, 2008). Additionally, Selfe (1999, 2009) and Lunsford (2006) describe a lack of attention to modes of communication, and the discipline has largely ignored their concerns. In order to embrace new media, the full potential of multimodality must first be realized. The conflation of—and lack of attention paid to—frequently used terms is a detriment to rhetoric and composition as a discipline. What seems like a small matter in terms of language is actually a significant matter in terms of intellectual work; as I have argued throughout this chapter, what we call ourselves, our research, and our objects of study has consequences. Imprecise language use has implications for the integrity of our scholarship. The construction and dissemination of new knowledge, especially in regards to new media and related concepts, depends on the clarity of our language and terminology. Without coherent research, a coherent discipline cannot exist. A secondary concerns is that without a uniform articulation of multimodality and new media, the discipline is open to attack from other disciplines as well, making it likely to fall apart because of lack of cohesion. More important than attacks from outsiders, the value of our work is at stake from both inside and outside the discipline.

Without a solid, uniform articulation, the value of the work being built on and around concepts of new media is shaky and often suspect. In order for the discipline to grow and adapt to a changing world and changing conceptions of writing, our research and process of theory building needs to be valuable. Our theories become valuable as we
carefully engage in intellectually rigorous research, which is later accepted through the process of knowledge adoption in the discipline. Without a strong foundation for these terms and intellectually rigorous research, the growth of the discipline is stifled, as is the other important work of the discipline, such as teaching and disseminating new understandings.

As Lauer (2009) points out, the terms multimodal and multimedia are often conflated, and as evidenced by other articles and presentations, the terms multimodal and new media are also being conflated (Coley & Erickson, 2009). Because the discipline does not have seminal texts that give all-encompassing definitions of each term, scholars run the risk of using terms that do not convey the meanings they hope for, or they run the risk of confusing other scholars when these terms are conflated. Still, perhaps these definitions have simply not yet emerged but eventually will. Shifting terms and shifting emphases manifest blurred lines of study within the discipline, which could implicate a shift in the discipline itself or a new line of the discipline’s evolution. Birr Moje (2009) argues, “A number of scholars have offered collections of particular studies of new and multiple media or literate practice (e.g., Bruce, 2003; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, & Kieffer, 1998),” and adds that she “[imagines] a single text, or set of texts, that attempts to be exhaustive in its cataloging effort by considering the following distinctions” (p. 349). Perhaps, though, we do not need seminal texts to set in stone currently evolving definitions. Instead, we need to engage in explicit discussion, reflection, and (possible) agreement on what we mean when we say “X,” where, for the purposes of this project and the current trends in the field, “X” is new
media (these discussions would eliminate much of the confusion across the discipline, though, when “X” might stand for “multimodal,” “compose,” or any other set of key terms with varied and confusing definitions). This project contributes to a discussion aimed at focusing our terms. Though Birr Moje may imagine and hope for a seminal text with one, specific definition of “new media” within rhetoric and composition, the use of new media within the field is both already too diverse and too prevalent to be confined by one definition. However, this does not preclude the need for more precision in our language and discussions; a need this dissertation highlights.

Adding to the problem of crafting a single, specific definition of “new media” is new media’s status as an imported concept, coming out of communications, art, film, and media studies (Manovich, 2001; Johnson-Eilola 2005). Importing terms from other, though related, disciplines can also affect the development of the discipline. By borrowing terminology, we limit the ways in which we can think about multimodality and new media but we also have a strong definitional foundation with which to draw from. Sanchez (2005) argues rhetoric and composition does not have its own theory; rather, it borrows theory from literature, from psychology, from history, from political science, from economics (Trimbur, 1993; Berlin, 1993). Sanchez argues that rhetoric and composition scholars should develop a theory that is 100% rhetoric and composition. At this point in the field’s development, it may be impossible to have or craft a theory that is genuinely 100% rhetoric and composition: the discipline is full of borrowed theories, and scholars rely on these theories for their research and work as well as their understanding of the discipline. A more achievable goal than the one Sanchez suggests might be to
consciously develop a theory showcasing the context it brings with it and the work that needs to be done to make it fit within the discipline, especially in regards to new media. Rather than simply borrowing terms and taking on new identities, scholars in the discipline must carefully explain the contexts of the theory and its fit in the new context of rhetoric and composition.

By drawing on concepts of design, visuals, and media from disciplines outside of rhetoric and composition, the same risk of immigrant, poorly situated theories is run. Does rhetoric and composition studies have its own theory of composing and design that does not pull from semiotics, linguistics, mass communications, or graphic design? The discipline has borrowed terms and concepts from all of these related but different disciplines. Being more realistic and explicit about how these terms and theories have been utilized and re-crafted to fit the discipline’s needs is one way scholars can purposefully bring such theories into disciplinary discussions. Utilizing foundational definitions in rhetoric such as the available means of persuasion and theorizing on how different modes become different will expand the limits of the discipline. An historical undertaking to link different concepts and theories that fall under theories of multimodality and new media will make apparent the origins of these theories; my study seeks to trace the growth of these theories in the discipline.

Such an historical study will not only allow us to identify how the discipline has developed and how theories of new media have developed, but it can reveal trends in our thinking as well as blind spots in need of our attention. For example, much of the research on new media centers on pedagogical inquiry. Scholars ask how and why new
media can and should be used in the composition classroom rather than theorizing on how new media undergirds everyday composition for many writers outside of the classroom, in personal and professional contexts. Very few scholarly pieces are removed from the composition classroom, a trend that historical studies uncover.

Although there have been numerous historical studies tracing the history of the field (Berlin, 1987, 1996; Hawisher & Selfe, 1989, 1991; Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran & Selfe, 1996; Connors, 1997, 2000; Inman, 2004), these studies emphasize time periods. For example, Berlin’s (1987) *Rhetoric and reality* examines 85 years of rhetoric and composition’s history, from 1900-1985. In their *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education*, Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe (1996) examine the subdiscipline’s history from 1979-1994. Inman (2004) utilizes time periods through his *Computers and Writing: The Cyborg Era*, centering chapters on 1960-1979 and 1979-2000. While many scholars organize their content around time periods (decades or half-decades, for instance) and big issues that were prevalent during those time periods, a timeline cannot be the only indicator of a discipline’s development. Instead, carefully examining trends over and across time, as well as definitions and factors contributing to the process of experimentation (as described earlier) are effective methods of conducting historical inquiry of disciplinary development. (Mannheim, 1952; Pickering, 1990, 1992). This project contributes to the scholarly conversation surrounding the discipline’s development by drawing on such ideas about trends over time and other contributing factors.

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7 This concept of organization will be discussed in Chapter 2, where I describe methodological issues, including that of historians’ descriptions of themes and uses of time periods.
My study focuses on publications from 2000-2010. This timeline allows me to understand recent applications of new media: the theories, concepts, and definitions contributing to the process of experimentation I examine are particularly relevant to this decade in which technology has, in some ways, come to the forefront of research and teaching. Within this ten-year period, I examine how the scholarship about “new media” develops.

**Looking ahead**

This chapter has grounded the project using six key terms and situated the project within the context of the contemporary discipline and historical studies of the discipline’s development. I have suggested “new media” has been taken up by rhetoric and composition scholars, but the term has been applied so widely and used so broadly that its meaning is obscure. I argue that by examining rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development through the historical trends in which new media is discussed and defined, a more stable conceptualization of new media within rhetoric and composition emerges.

In Chapter 2, I review contemporary historiographic methods in the discipline. I argue that rhetoric and composition historians have a wide array of tools available to them when trying to identify historical trends and trace disciplinary development. However, methodological discussions within published historical research have often been sparse. Because current trends in empirical research studies in rhetoric and composition are becoming more and more precise in methodological discussions, historical studies should also be more precisely described. A precise discussion of historical methods would include discussions of how the scholar selected a corpus of
materials to review, how she approached those texts ideologically, and which analytic methods she used to make sense of the materials. I examine three historical texts through close reading, and I use these texts to help illustrate my points about expectations contemporary readers have and how writers can address such expectations through more precise methodological discussions.

My methodology for this dissertation is outlined in Chapter 3. I trace historical trends of new media’s growth in the discipline through a systematic collection of articles (from four of the discipline’s journals) focusing on “new media.” I describe my collection of this corpus in detail before describing my two separate analyses of the corpus via inductive coding schemes to uncover and examine which scholarly conversations in the discipline incorporate discussion of “new media.” The second analysis process, aimed at understanding how rhetoric and compositionists actually define “new media,” is a content analysis of types of scholarly definitions and arguments. I explain how I identified and collected definitions of “new media” before inductively coding those definitions.

In Chapter 4, I identify key concepts that allowed new media to be incorporated into rhetoric and composition. In my discussion of these key concepts, trends of the field emerge. In this chapter, I argue that an analysis of the corpus articles reveals rhetoric and composition scholars’ need to continually re-define the discipline. By constantly describing and re-describing the discipline, scholars build the discipline and push it along new pathways, bringing topics such as new media into the discussion as legitimate areas of study.
Understanding how the discipline draws on trends to build knowledge, I am able to analyze definitions of “new media” across the article corpus. Chapter 5 focuses on these definitions and the meanings and scholarly currency such definitions carry for the field. Further analysis of scholars’ definitions of “new media” reveals that new media has been discussed in very distinct ways. Although disagreements persist, new media is often characterized as digital and multimodal, yet scholars put forth conceptual theories demonstrating new media’s cultural timeliness is tied to shifting discussions of composing (often cyclically influenced by writing technologies) both in and outside of the university.

In the sixth chapter, I conclude the study, suggesting where and how new media has entered the discipline and how scholarly discussions about “new media” show the development of the discipline. Rhetoric and composition is a fluid discipline, often incorporating a variety of theories and concepts from other disciplines. New media is one such term, but unlike some other concepts, new media has no stable definition in the discipline. The lack of fixedness attributed to new media stems from its incorporation of multiple elements. Because it has the potential to incorporate so many elements, new media represents the current growth of rhetoric and composition as a discipline encompassing a spectrum of interests related to writing. In ten years, definitions of new media have fluctuated along with the interests of scholars (as noted by topics and types of articles published). A more fixed definition of new media would be a conceptual theory about new media as a socially timely and meaningful break from print traditions.
Chapter 2

(Re)Imagining Historical Inquiry in Rhetoric and Composition

“In fact, thinking of [Bob Connors’s] life in writing calls up no stronger image than of
him as a happy bookworm, burrowing away in a library or archive, searching for obscure
accounts of teaching practices, dog-eared textbooks, or pieces of student writing from the
past.”

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, 2003, p. xv

“Stephen Witte would not have been tempted by the metaphor in my title
[“NCTE/CCCC’s recent war on scholarship”]. His belief in scholarship was at root
ecumenical, just the opposite of warlike. This is easily seen in his own scholarship. He
launched Written Communication in 1984 to welcome a broader range of research topics
and methods than were being promoted at the time in discourse and composition studies.
His own professional writings included and sometimes combined genres and methods
that other scholars declared as embattled foes. Although others have pictured teaching
and research as a growing conflict (an “escalated war,” Ziolkowski, 1996, p. 572), he
distinguished himself in both.”

Richard Haswell, 2005, p. 198-199

The above quotations indicate two understandings of rhetoric and composition
research from two renowned scholars in the discipline’s history. Ede and Lunsford (2003)
describe the life and times of Robert J. Connors as a prominent archivist. Haswell (2005)
characterizes Stephen P. Witte as a scholar bent on rigorous, empirical research. The
words paint different images: one of serendipity and finding pleasure in history, the other
of mending disciplinary divides and promoting enduring scholarship. Connors typifies
the way contemporary rhetoric and composition scholars conceptualize historical inquiry
while Witte embodies diversity of research grounded in different methodologies. Though
historical inquiry is largely associated with archival research, rhetoric and composition
historiographies can follow a Connors-esque stereotype of archival, historical research or
they can borrow from a Witte-esque approach to research, bridging historical, archival
inquiry and empirical methodologies. Rhetoric and composition scholars should be more
explicit in discussing their methods as they continue to write disciplinary histories and
histories of areas and objects falling under the purview of the field. No matter what
methods we employ for historical inquiry, they are always culturally and ideologically
situated interpretive acts. Incorporating diverse methodological approaches can ensure
such interpretations are explicitly described, making contemporary historical inquiry the
type of research both Connors and Witte would gladly embrace.

Rhetoric and composition historians\(^8\) have written histories and laid out the
foundation of the modern discipline: its origins, its frustrations, and its evolution (Gaur,

Historical pieces are regularly drafted, as evidenced by articles published in the last
decade (Olson, 2002; Moran, 2003; Bazerman, 2004, 2008; Stahl & Hartman, 2004;
Russell, 2006; Berkenkotter, 2007; L’Eplatteneir, 2009; Knievel, 2009). In this chapter, I
examine how rhetoric and composition historians disclose their methods. Understanding
and drawing on the features of historical research situates this dissertation as historical
inquiry: in this chapter, I make a specific call for implementing historical, archival
research as RAD scholarship (scholarship that is replicable, aggregable, and data-

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\(^8\) I use the term “rhetoric and composition historians” to refer to those rhetoric and composition scholars
who specialize in the history of the discipline: how it evolved in institutions of American higher education,
what themes and concepts have been important to it, how changes in theory and pedagogy have influenced
the American culture and vice versa, etc.
Historical inquiry has been culturally situated in rhetoric and composition’s past as well as the discipline’s current paradigm. Although some rhetoric and composition historians—such as Berlin, Connors, Bizzell, and Enos—have been influential in the discipline’s development (and the discipline’s understanding of its foundations), the methods behind their research have not been explicitly described. As the discipline and its published work have developed from a humanist approach to a broader, interdisciplinary approach, methodological considerations have become more important. Smagorinsky (2008), for example, suggests that short, vague methods discussions are detrimental to the strength of an article or text. Modern scholarship, according to Smagorinsky, should be described in terms of how data was collected and analyzed, showing clear links between how writers collected and interpreted data in order to draw their conclusions. Smagorinsky (2008) wants scholars to display the warrants moving them from data to claim (Toulmin, 2003). Because scholars always use methods (whether they are empirical methods or conceptual/theoretical methods), and because the strength of our claims rests on the evidence supporting those claims, contemporary scholars should take the time to carefully articulate their methods and describe how those methods lead to particular results/claims. This process applies not only to research in rhetoric and composition but also to closely related areas of study, such as literary scholarship: an interpretation of a text is still an interpretation, and it is grounded in some methods of information analysis (MacNealy, 1999).

There are a variety of methods rhetoric and composition historians can draw on. A
RAD framework\textsuperscript{9} is one such method. Rhetoric and composition historians use methods and describe those methods in manners appropriately suited to their times and disciplinary norms. Some historical studies, such as Fahnestock and Secor’s (1991) and Wilder’s (2005),\textsuperscript{10} are already employing RAD methods. Traditionally, rhetoric and composition has been a humanist discipline, but the discipline has grown to embrace many different ideas from various fields, including openly applying and describing methodologies from the social sciences (see MacNealy, 1999; Johanek, 2000; Haswell, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2008). Every written account of research is an act of interpretation. As such, any study—whether qualitative, historical, quantitative, or humanist—is open to being challenged. When a RAD historical project is challenged, it can be tested more easily than other studies whose methods may not be explicitly described. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest what is at stake with any inquiry “is whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods” (p. 278). Many frameworks for historical inquiry ask this question, but describing historical studies as RAD research may make the answer more apparent. Additionally, utilizing a RAD framework can allow researchers to do similar historical projects over multiple time periods. For example, a RAD study of computers and writing histories in the 1960s could be reproduced in the 2000s—do some of the same trends hold, or have concepts and discussions diverged significantly? The same methods of data collection and analysis can consistently be employed to different time periods. Such a replication is desirable

\textsuperscript{9} RAD scholarship will be defined in this chapter’s “The importance of methods in rhetoric and composition histories” section.

\textsuperscript{10} Later in this chapter I explain why I consider the texts by Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder (2005) historical studies.
because it allows scholars to examine if trends are consistent over time or if the current framework for understanding the discipline has changed. Differences in these studies show areas where the field has grown and shifted, so studies that reproduce earlier studies have value for charting the field’s development over time. They can also help researchers maintain a consistent means of data collection and interpretation over extensive time periods where large amounts of data might be collected. Finally, RAD research offers scholars the ability to look empirically at historical trends, which might speak to different audiences and enhance the discipline’s status in the eyes of disciplinary outsiders such as administrators, grant-offering organizations, and colleagues in other disciplines.\textsuperscript{11}

In what follows, I describe what it means to do historical research in rhetoric and composition by first articulating how the discipline has previously defined and used historical inquiry. I briefly describe the methods of three foundational histories in the discipline, highlighting different areas of the texts’ methods sections in order to begin describing historical inquiry as RAD research. The research questions guiding the following discussion of historical methods in rhetoric and composition are:

- What methods are employed for historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition?
- What does a new cohesive framework for rigorous empirical historical inquiry into rhetoric and composition look like?

**Historical inquiry: Types of historical studies in rhetoric and composition**

Historical inquiry is a term used in this project to encompass a variety of rhetoric

\textsuperscript{11} See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the impact outsider perspectives have on disciplinary development.
and composition studies. Historical inquiries in rhetoric and composition scholarship are approached through a variety of lenses and include studies examining the development of a discipline (disciplinary study), object, genre, or term (discursive practices) over a particular time period. Under such a definition, studies about a discipline and studies about a term, even discursive studies tracing the growth of a term, are described as historical. This definition covers a wide variety of projects, even some—but not all—longitudinal projects. For example, some ethnographies, such as Heath’s (1984) *Ways with Words*, are longitudinal studies. In these studies, the change over time is not the objective of these inquiries, though. Instead, the objective is to provide a rich sense of the community, a feat that can only be accomplished during a lengthy study. However, longitudinal projects where time is a key factor in the study are historical inquiries because they seek to uncover patterns over time (historical trends). In addition to a focus on chronology is the amount of attention scholars pay to documentary evidence. Using a variety of primary sources (henceforth referred to as artifacts) as evidentiary support is an indication of historical inquiry; however, different types of artifacts constitute appropriate data for particular types of historical studies. As described throughout this chapter and following chapters, what constitutes a primary source artifact is sometimes a question fraught with problems.

Primary sources, as McDowell (2002) notes, are integral to learning a history: without primary accounts, researchers are left with versions of history removed from that history in some way. Even MacNealy (1999) describes the importance of primary texts for rhetoric and composition scholarship. Primary texts get researchers closest to the
event they are researching. Because primary sources do offer contemporary researchers a snapshot of the past in ways secondary sources might not, historical inquiry relies heavily on at least a few critical, primary courses. Primary sources, though, are not always printed (recorded/transcribed/annotated interviews, personal writings, etc.), but they may be oral interviews or conversations left unrecorded. Connors (1992) describes a variety of primary textual artifacts, and he argues even textbooks, journals and magazines, professional books, and biographies and memoirs might be considered primary sources for certain types of historical research questions. Additionally, because of the type of question asked, primary sources might be something very different than what scholars are used to, such as journal articles (Connors, 1991, 1992).12

Connors’s (1981) “The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse” is an example of an historical, longitudinal study. In this article, Connors examines “the rise, reign, and fall of the most influential classification scheme of the last hundred years: the ‘forms’ or ‘modes’ of discourse: Narration, Description, Exposition, and Argument” (p. 444). Throughout the piece, Connors argues about the history of each mode of discourse (or genre of writing). His text, therefore, is historical, not discursive. Although Connors examines particular types of discourse, he seeks to uncover the history of genres over time; he does not only seek to describe the features of particular discursive models but also the shifts in genre preference and prevalence over time. Here, Connors is more interested in the genres’ historical trends, much the same as I am currently concerned with historical trends of new media. Similarly, Fahnestock and Secor’s (1991) “The

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12 See Chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion.
Rhetoric of Literary Criticism” is also an historical, longitudinal study. In this text, Fahnestock and Secor examine literary criticism. The purpose of their study is to identify rhetorical features of literary criticism as a genre during the 1970s. As a longitudinal study, Fahnestock and Secor trace developments of a genre (considered an object) over time. Because the authors are concerned with the features of a genre in a particular time period, the text can be considered historical inquiry. Even projects focused on disciplinary development are historical inquiries. For example, Connors’s (1986) later piece, “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline,” is concerned with disciplinary status. However, he is concerned with the development of the discipline over time, so that the study is not simply about what links textbooks to the discipline’s growth. Rather, the study focuses on the roles textbooks have historically played in shaping the discipline over time. The emphasis on patterns and trends over time—coupled with a reliance on primary source artifacts—is what denotes a study as historical.

Historical inquiries in rhetoric and composition frequently theorize the discipline’s history based on many different aspects. Such inquiries are often focused on discursive practices in the discipline (Barton, 1994), the beginnings of a discipline (Kitzhaber, 1963), or even the development of subdisciplines (Moran, 2003). These types of studies (discussed below) are all integral to understanding how rhetoric and composition functions as a discipline in contemporary American universities and colleges. In order to examine the field from so many angles, different artifacts are investigated, from archived texts and teacher manuscripts to conference proceedings and textbook genres.
Many studies have at their centers a desire to unpack the beginning of rhetoric and composition (or its subdisciplines) as a formal discipline of study (Connors, 1997; Bouquet, 1999; Moran, 2003). In *Composition-Rhetoric*, for example, Connors (1997) attempts to describe rhetoric and composition as a discipline apart from the umbrella of literature and/or linguistics. Connors makes a case for rhetoric and composition to be situated within the English department but as a distinct aspect (discipline) within the department. His argument also entails a degree of politics: he argues for the work of rhetoric and composition to be taken seriously by the English department as well as the larger university. In “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers Pre- to Post-Open Admissions,” Boquet (1999) makes a similar argument for writing centers. She demonstrates that writing centers have a history stemming from the development of rhetoric and composition, and she situates the subdiscipline of writing center studies as a legitimate area of study for rhetoric and composition scholars. In “*Computers and Composition* 1983-2002: What We have Hoped for,” Moran (2003) investigates the research themes published in *Computers and Composition*. He describes what the types of articles (based on research questions and objects of analysis) published in the journal *Computers and Composition* say about the structure and content of computers and writing as a subdiscipline. These studies of the beginnings of the (sub)discipline examine how the (sub)discipline came to be, what larger social or institutional situations pushed the (sub)discipline to arise, and how the (sub)discipline developed professionally. Although the title *Composition-Rhetoric* does not immediately indicate a time period, it does invoke a time period for rhetoric and composition scholars. On the other hand, Bouquet
and Moran’s titles both explicitly describe a timeline of study, emphasizing the historical, chronological nature of these studies.

Historical inquiries identifying shifts over time have also centered on the development of the discipline. The purpose of these studies is to investigate or establish dimensions of disciplinarity: to argue that a discipline exists, that it is practical, and that it is of a particular type or purpose. Connors (1991, 1997, 2000, 2007) has been known for his research detailing the rise of rhetoric and composition as well as for his suggestion that rhetoric and composition should focus mainly on composition pedagogy. In chapters on “Historical Inquiry” in Gary Olson’s (2002) *Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work*, Miller (“Writing Studies as a Mode of Inquiry”), Jarratt (“New Dispositions for Historical Studies in Rhetoric”), and Wells (“Claiming the Archive for Rhetoric and Composition”) also suggest what rhetoric and composition should be: relational, inquiry-driven, a material act of recovery, and interdisciplinary (respectively). Miller, Jarratt, and Wells present claims about how the discipline started and what it should continue to focus on in future studies as it grows and expands.

Rhetoric and composition scholars who have focused their historical inquiries on studying the discipline’s growth and evolution through artifacts look for trends and patterns surfacing over an extended time period. For example, Connors (1981; 1983) employed historical inquiry to study the import of certain artifacts on the field. As previously noted, in “The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse,” Connors (1981) looks at a relatively short period of time (just a few years) to see how the object (modes of discourse) evolved in the discipline. For “Handbooks: History of a Genre,” Connors
(1983) focused on a period of several decades while tracing the evolution of one genre of textbook. Though Connors tends to study the evolution of the discipline’s materials, contemporary scholars such as Knievel (2009) study the development of abstract objects such as ideas and theories. Knievel’s study examines computers and writing scholars’ concerns over time. For example, he uses a foundational text in the subdiscipline (Nold’s “Fear and Trembling: The Humanist Approaches the Computer,” 1975) to frame his research question, “what, precisely, is humanistic about computers and writing” (p. 92, emphasis in original). Nold’s (1975) piece (which is not an historical inquiry but more of a personal essay about being an English scholar and teacher working with computers) articulates the position that humanist teachers, who work with composition or literature, are in control of technology and can use it to their advantage rather than always being beholden to it. Knievel begins with Nold’s (1975) text to invoke the historically fraught relationship between technology and English education while he helps rhetoric and compositionists understand there is yet a place for humanist educators and researchers in the evolving subdiscipline. His text explores the link between the subdiscipline’s humanistic origins and its emphasis on societies and cultures with interests in electronic literacy habits and modes of composition. His objects of study are ideas and abstract concepts found within other artifacts (textbooks, prompt assignments, published scholarship.). Early histories frequently focused on artifacts, as Connors’s work demonstrates, and while some contemporary scholarship (Ramsey et al., 2010) still focus on such artifacts, many (such as Knievel, 2009) focus on abstract concepts found within artifacts.
Other historical inquiries have been comparative in nature. Typically, historical inquiry focuses on artifacts and concepts, and comparative historical inquiries are similar—they compare different types of artifacts or sometimes different areas of history. Some comparative studies center on similar artifacts such as utterances (Fahnestock and Secor, 1991; Wilder, 2005). Wilder, replicating Fahnestock and Secor’s study and comparing her results to theirs, examines journal articles from several peer-reviewed literary criticism genres to construct theories about the rhetorical nature and development of literary criticism. Other historical inquiries have called for a more diverse understanding of comparative data, such as Enos’s (2002) suggestion that we compare object-artifacts (such as pottery and tile mosaics) with print-linguistic artifacts (such as essays, poems, and narratives) to get a more complete understanding of the time periods studied.

Enos (2002) points out the two main types of artifacts to which scholars turn; however, object-artifacts (as he describes them) are less commonly studied in contemporary historical scholarship. Historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition is frequently confined to print-linguistic artifacts such as interview transcripts, class or teaching notes, written responses, journal articles, professional books, emailed conversations, personal narratives, and textbooks. Material artifacts, however, are varied and can include as many items as can definitions of discourse and text. For example, some studies may describe written materials out of various archives (Connors, 1981; 1983; 1991; 1997; Ramsey et al., 2010). Artifacts might also include speech products and speech-related products such as the memories of a person or collective group, especially
when oral histories are being crafted (Gronbeck, 1998). Conceptual objects are less concrete, such as hypertext and digital compositions (Dewitt, 1996). Especially for comparative studies, objects of study are often print-linguistic and include comparing specific types of documents (Wilder, 2005; Moran, 2003; Ferreira-Buckley, 1998; Fahnestock & Secor, 1991) rather than looking toward the object-artifacts Enos (2002) describes. However, sometimes such object-artifacts are also used, especially when photographs or films help a researcher better understand an aspect of the history.

Rhetoric and composition historians, though focusing on a wide variety of purposes and artifacts, rarely articulate their methods in depth. Though historians sometimes go into detail about their particular objects of study, their methodological procedures are by and large opaque: scholars tend to briefly gloss methods in a few paragraphs or less. Early, foundational historical studies (which are still utilized today), such as those by Connors (1991; 1997) and Berlin (1987), examine the history of rhetoric and composition as a field emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In such early studies, in-depth methods discussions were not an integral component of how the scholarship was described and were not common in these published histories. The same is true in other early texts as well. For example, in “Handbooks: History of a Genre” (Connors, 1983), no method of analysis is described for identifying the shift in handbook trends over time. Readers are left unaware of how Connors identified which handbooks he would study or how he narrowed his corpus of data. Even in the 1990s, methods were rarely discussed at length in the discipline’s histories. Boquet (1999), for example, does not identify how she came to write her history of writing centers. She does not fully
describe the methods framing her study, how she worked through issues of identifying artifacts, or how she analyzed artifacts to uncover trends in the discipline over time.

On the other hand, more and more scholars are beginning to pay more attention to methods discussions. Wilder (2005), for example, includes a comprehensive methods discussion in her replication of Fahnestock and Secor’s (1991) historical study of how literary criticism is crafted as a genre. Wilder’s (2005) text is an example of historical scholarship with a strong methods section. She outlines research questions and specific methods of data collection and analysis, a technique both Smagorinsky (2008) and rhetoric and composition archivist L’Eplatteneir (2009) argue we do not see enough in rhetoric and composition’s historical research. Wilder (2005) outlines the reason for her replication of Fahnestock and Secor’s (1991) study, beginning with a description of her sample: what articles it consisted of and why. She goes on to define the framework within which she codes her sample of scholarly literary criticism (based on Fahnestock and Secor’s, but with modifications to better assess rhetorical attributes). She describes in depth each of the rhetorical tropes she codes for—from stasis to the five special topoi of literary criticism Fahnestock and Secor define. She specifically states her “qualitative identification of claims and warrants proceeded both deductively and inductively” (p. 85). She describes the definitions of each topoi and gives readers a sense of her data by describing frequency rates. Throughout her discussion, Wilder compares her steps of data collection and analysis to that of Fahnestock and Secor (1991). Haswell (2005) also engages in an in-depth methods discussion (contributing to his study’s RAD framework) for his historical inquiry. He examined the types of research NCTE and CCCC's publishes.
Haswell describes his methods as Wilder (2005) does, beginning with data collection and moving through a discussion of analysis. He even describes the ratio of agreement with his inter-raters (describing reliability).

Historical studies over the past 30 years (as described above) have been the shoulders on which contemporary rhetoric and composition histories stand. Such studies are excellent foundational texts, but the discipline has begun to incorporate more empirical models of research, which are present in historical inquiry as well (see Fahnestock & Secor, 1991; Haswell, 2005). Texts exploring methodological issues have also been published. Often, they describe what it means to do research in rhetoric and composition, from content analysis to coding schemes to historical inquiry (Kirsch & Sullivan, 1992). Some methodological studies are meant to influence historical research in rhetoric and composition. Vitanza (1994) discusses the purpose of engaging in historical studies of the field. He writes of “De/Negation: Another way of saying (“some more” of) all this bout searching for a new conceptual restarting place, or a new way of recounting history in dis/order to revive history” (p. 184, emphasis in original). Vitanza further describes rhetoric and composition historical inquiry as a means to show, “we want to be valued” (p. 184). For all his discussion of rhetoric and composition histories, Vitanza does not describe clear-cut methods; rather, he insists on the variety and nuance of historical studies. He repeatedly characterizes history/hystery as a search for “some more,” and in doing so, claims his approach to historical inquiry “will not be a traditional disciplinary approach, nor will it be an attempt that is informed by a grand narrative metadisciplinary approach” (p. 189).
Other authors may examine how historical methods are *implemented* (Enos, 2002) or discuss how historical methods *should be implemented* in future studies (Olson, 2002; Stahl & Hartman, 2004; Bazerman, 2008; L’Eplatteneir, 2009). Many scholars turn to Connors (1992) for advice on how to craft historical inquiry. For example, Stahl & Hartman (2004) reiterate Connors’s (1992) hypothesis-driven approach to historical inquiry. Novice scholars turn to anthologies and collected works on writing research methodologies (Stahl & Hartman, 2004; Bazerman & Prior, 2004), but these pieces are not very explicit in their discussions of analysis. L’Eplatteneir (2009) suggests graduate faculty must train and mentor novice historical scholars because such discussions have not been prevalent in programs or published texts. Even with these types of methodological scholarship, there are few resources for rhetoric and composition scholars undertaking historical inquiry. As archivists have realized the lack of instruction and resources for historical methods, a few texts have been published, most notably Ramsey et al.’s (2010) *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*. Because so little explicit discussion about historical methods exists, an explicit framework for historical analysis needs to be articulated, as will be described in Chapter 3.
The importance of methods in rhetoric and composition histories

According to Connors (1992), history in rhetoric and composition is interpretative in nature. He suggests that historical inquiries present an awareness of history by utilizing archival retrieval processes and by identifying the prejudices of the researcher and society. When conducting historical inquiry, Connors argues that the steps of analysis include external criticism (identifying the primary source as one that is integral to answering the research questions), internal criticism (identifying the source as accurate, acknowledging its biases, and corroborating factual data from the source), and synthesis of materials (utilizing internal and external criticism to identify a trend and suggest it to the larger audience). He suggests that scholars tell stories about their research, indicating histories are interpretive acts, as is all scholarship (Connors, 1992; McDowell, 2002).

Although Connors (1992) presents a system (as noted above) for historical analysis, his terms may still feel vague to readers. Historical inquiry is, however, concrete research, depending on evidence and methods of analysis as any inquiry does. Some models of inquiry are more concrete than others: Haswell’s (2005) discussion of RAD scholarship, for example, suggests scholars more concretely describe their methods. In 2005, Haswell called for RAD studies, which he defined as:

scholarly investigation that is replicable, aggregable, and data supported. RAD scholarship is a best effort inquiry into the actualities of a situation, inquiry that is explicitly enough systematicized in sampling and execution and analysis to be

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13 Connors is speaking particularly about historical inquiry here, but I maintain that all analysis is an interpretation of data and evidence—whether it is approached through an historical lens, an ethnographic lens, a statistical lens, or even a rhetorical lens.
replicated, exactly enough circumscribed to be extended, and factually enough supported to be verified. (p. 201)

Similarly, Smagorinsky (2008) claims,

in order for results [of a scholarly study] to be credible, the methods of collection, reduction, and analysis need to be highly explicit. Further, the methods need to be clearly aligned with the framing theory and the rendering of results. (p. 392)

Haswell’s piece is itself a history of RAD scholarship on the discipline’s flagstaff organizations: National Council of Teacher’s of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). In his history, Haswell follows his definition of RAD scholarship by explicitly describing his methods, going so far as to discuss the replicability of the study and noting his coding scheme and tested degree of inter-rater reliability (making the project replicable, aggregable, and data supported).

While Smagorinsky’s piece is highly personal and descriptive, and not a piece of RAD scholarship, he still describes the values of fully articulated methodologies and methods sections in published scholarship.

Together, Haswell (2005) and Smagorinsky (2008) frame my discussion on what historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition look like in contemporary scholarship by defining RAD scholarship and suggesting the importance of methodological discussions. While Connors (1992) supplies rhetoric and composition historians with methods, adding Haswell’s (2005) and Smagorinsky’s (2008) suggestions of explicit methods to Connors’s discussion enhances methodological discussions of historical inquiry. Both Haswell (2005) and Smagorinsky (2008) suggest the importance of producing and
describing RAD scholarship to investigate the growth and development of a discipline, object, or discursive feature. Susan Miller (2002) notes, as rhetoric and composition “matures, its particular methods and goals need a strategically calculated descriptor that can assure its future development” (p. 41), which RAD research offers.

Historical inquiry has sometimes been presented unsystematically: methods sections are frequently sparse. Even though rigorous methods of data collection and analysis have been employed to produce historical scholarship, many rhetoric and composition historians have not described their historical, archival research as RAD scholarship and have sometimes only offered brief methods discussions. However, in order to have enduring scholarship, the interpretations presented in scholars’ histories must be explicit enough to be replicated, logistically and concretely inviting other scholars to take up similar studies of the discipline to uncover more of the discipline’s foundations and growth. Smagorinsky (2008) suggests the cultural moment for explicit methods sections as the “epicenter” of research has come. Historical research can also benefit from a methods-section foundation or epicenter because RAD historical inquiry will fulfill the need of making interpretations more explicit to readers. Many histories that have already been written are probably RAD scholarship already, but without specific discussions of analytical methods, the scholarship cannot be fully tested or reproduced. For example, Connors (1983) must have had some sort of method for collecting and analyzing data when he wrote “Handbooks: A History of a Genre.” His research was probably replicable (others scholars could use the same methods to collect and analyze the data), aggregable (the same study could be applied to contemporary textbooks), and
Writing RAD rhetoric and composition histories does not change the historical nature or the interpretive acts of researching and writing those histories. Rather, RAD histories ensure the process of inquiry and analysis of materials are both explicit and reliable while opening the histories to specific and encouraging critiques by making methods (which are present regardless of whether they have been described in detail) explicit. Where histories are interpretive (as are all analyses), an interpretation that has not been fully described to readers is less reliable because it is not as concrete or replicable as more explicit interpretations (e.g., explicit methods sections). Whereas RAD histories may have been conducted (though not described) in the past, conducting and presenting rhetoric and composition’s histories as RAD scholarship in the future will describe their reliability and transparency without losing their ideological, interpretive underpinnings.

In the following section, I use close reading techniques to review the methods discussions of three foundational historical inquiries in rhetoric and composition. Although the scholars writing these texts have touched on their methodological decision-making (some more explicitly than others), they have not adequately described their methods (for a contemporary audience) to describe the research as RAD. By reading closely, the underlying methodologies can (and should) be identified.

These three texts (Berlin, 1987; Hawisher et al. 1996; Connors, 1997) comprise my data set because they are foundational texts in that they describe the history of the
overarching discipline (Berlin, 1987; Connors, 1997) or subdiscipline (Hawisher et al., 1996). They are well-known histories in the discipline, frequently cited by other scholars also engaged in historical inquiry, especially about the development of the (sub)discipline.\textsuperscript{14} They have been particularly useful, instructive examples for rhetoric and composition historians. Because of their influence on the discipline and scholars’ understandings of the discipline (and its development), scholars should pay attention to how these foundational texts were composed: what data was used to construct them, what methods of analysis were used, and how the methods were described. Reviewing foundational texts allows contemporary scholars to understand how methods were discussed in previous histories and compare those descriptions with how scholars today might write a methods section for an historical inquiry.

I review only three texts to give readers a brief discussion of how historical inquiry has been crafted in the past. More than three examples would be redundant because many foundational historical texts utilize similar primary sources (some even draw on Kitzhaber’s dissertation\textsuperscript{15} from 1963)—and sometimes even draw on other foundational texts as secondary sources (for example, some of Connors’s texts build on Berlin’s). Two historical studies of the overarching discipline and one study of a subdiscipline demonstrate how historical methods are described in different ways and for

\textsuperscript{14} Connors is especially noted as a rhetoric and composition historian, as is Berlin. Throughout this project, Connors’s influence on my own work is clear. Ede and Lunsford (2003) argue, “His scholarly work helped us to better understand composition’s history” through his vast and regular historical research (p. xi). Frerria-Buckley (1998) describes Berlin’s contributions to historical research and the discipline: “Berlin [was] inspiring a generation of college teachers to take pride in their past” (p. 98). Additionally, simple citation indexing shows Berlin (1987) has been cited in at least 262 texts (at least 92 of which are journal articles) to date, Connors (1997) has been cited in at least 216 texts (at least 57 of which are journal articles), and Hawisher et al. (1996) has been cited in at least 115 texts (journal article numbers were unavailable).

\textsuperscript{15} Cited at least 68 times (at least 60 of which are journal articles), in books and articles as recent as 2010.
different purposes. My criteria for selecting the subdiscipline text was straightforward. The Hawisher et al. (1996) text, *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education: 1979-1994*, is integral for the current research project, as new media is frequently taken up by computers and writing as a subdiscipline of rhetoric and composition. All of these foundational texts are books. Because these texts are histories of a field and a subfield, they are not models for my own study (an historical study of a discursive practice). Instead, they are well known histories: a close reading of their methods sections serves an illustrative purpose. My study is not a disciplinary history, yet the methods I use should be carefully articulated, as should the methods of all historical studies. My close reading of these three foundational texts was based on two guiding questions:

1. How does the author describe his/her methods?
2. What did the author leave unsaid?

Using these questions as a lens through which to understand the methods discussions in each text provides an overview of what methods in rhetoric and composition’s historical inquiries look and sound like, how they are written, and how they have not been written. As Smagorinsky (2008) suggests, without explicit discussions of methods

I have only the vaguest sense of what the author is doing with the data in order to render
it into results. If I don’t know pretty clearly how the researcher is conducting the study, then it doesn’t matter much to me what the results are because I have no idea of how they were produced. (p. 393)

For contemporary studies, scholars such as Smagorinsky may discount research that lacks explicit discussions of how data was collected, how the data was narrowed, and how the analysis began, evolved, and led to the researchers’ conclusions. Although Smagorinsky writes with respect to empirical research, his claim can be extended to historical research as well. Haswell (2005) argues empirical methods have lasting qualities, but historiographies with sound methods also have such lasting qualities. Without specific methods, research cannot endure (Haswell, 2005). Instead of enduring, scholars may read the published research, find it interesting, and move on to the next published piece.

Including specific discussions of data collection and analytic methods illustrates how histories are examples of RAD scholarship. Additionally, explicit discussions of methods (required in RAD scholarship) allow other scholars to easily understand the analysis process from data collection to concluding arguments.

I begin with the first of the three texts published (Berlin, 1987) because it is foundational for the discipline, being cited by other foundational texts as well (Connors, 1997).16 Next, I examine Connors’s (1997) text because it has a purpose similar to Berlin’s piece. It is also a history of the discipline at large during a particular time, just as Berlin’s piece is. Last, I examine Hawisher et al.’s (1996) history on computers and

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16 Readers will also recall that Berlin (1987) has been cited in at least 262 texts (at least 92 of which are journal articles) to date.
writing. This text describes the history of the particular subdiscipline my research is focused on: computers and writing. It also gets closer to explicitly described research.

**Three foundational histories**

**Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985***

Berlin (1987) defines 85 years of writing instruction in American higher education. His text, sometimes used in introduction to composition theory and pedagogy courses, is frequently understood as foundational to understanding rhetoric and composition’s history because the discipline is so tied to writing instruction (an argument presented in Berlin’s text as well as others: see Connors, 1991, 1997; Nelms, 1993; Olson, 2002). Berlin’s scholarship has been both influential and foundational in the field, and his ethos as a scholar contributes to the strength of his texts.

His book is organized chronologically, beginning with an overview of rhetoric in American instruction during the late nineteenth century and ending with a discussion of rhetorical approaches up until the late 1970s. His chapters, while organized chronologically in (typically) two-decade increments, are also organized thematically. Each chapter highlights trends that typify the decades the chapter describes. The text’s organization may help readers gain a sense of his project: the text represents both a chronology of the discipline’s development as well as main issues that typified the discipline at key periods in its history. Though his purpose may be apparent through the structure of the text, his methods are typical of humanist historical inquiry. The methods
discussed in *Rhetoric and Reality*—a culturally situated and contextually appropriate methodology—have both strengths and weaknesses when compared to contemporary methods expectations.

Earlier decades of the discipline’s history accepted less in-depth discussions of methods; today, even historical research must be rigorous and described as such (Johanek, 2000). In regards to his methods, Berlin claims,

I have been concerned with both rhetorical theory and actual classroom practice and accordingly have examined hundreds of articles in scholarly journals on literature, writing, and education, and numerous theoretical treatises and textbooks—attempting throughout to follow rigorous scholarly procedures. (p. 18)

He goes on to describe a general audience of writing instructors without offering another word about his methods. The statement about “rigorous scholarly procedures” is the only explicit mention of methodological issues throughout the text. After this comment, methods are assumed and, as such, are not explicitly defined. This brief description, taken at face value, *feels* complete. To study a history, a scholar would review historical artifacts from a variety of places, with a more or less complete picture of the time period and activity taking shape as more and more artifacts are reviewed. To that end, Berlin’s study *feels* complete; he has reviewed “hundreds of articles […] and numerous theoretical treatises and textbooks” (p. 18). Although his study is a comprehensive study and the methods of data collection are appropriate, contemporary readers are left unaware of other aspects of the research methods.
There are several key issues not addressed in the text’s discussion of methods. While Berlin suggests the breadth of his study in his “hundreds of [texts],” readers might ask numerous questions: which journals were consulted and why were they consulted? Which treatises were read, which textbooks? How did Berlin narrow down this undoubtedly large corpus of data? What readers need to keep in mind, though, is that Berlin was writing a comprehensive history of the field. Therefore, selectivity is not such an issue. Because Berlin is writing a comprehensive history, he is not explicit about his methods of data collection and analysis. In order to identify some of his sources, though, readers might review his 25-page Works Cited for further information on the types of journals and treatises used to collect his data. Contemporary readers may not know much about his means of data collection, but his argument and methods discussion was appropriate for the time period during which he wrote and for the type of comprehensive study he was writing. Contemporary scholars may find fault with such an approach, but the fault they find is only because their epistemic framework is different than Berlin’s at his time of writing. Now, scholars are more inclined to look for precise methods discussions, but Berlin was not writing for a contemporary audience.

A secondary issue associated with Berlin’s methods statement is the implied purpose. Berlin says, “I have been concerned with both rhetorical theory and actual classroom practice” (p. 18), yet the text does not describe data that sounds directly related to “actual classroom practice,” such as teachers’ notes, prompts, or students’ evaluations. Earlier in the introduction, Berlin claims,

I want also to examine the concrete classroom practices to which [rhetorical
theories and the epistemological and ideological elements of the theories] have
led. I will thus be as concerned with what the authors of articles and textbooks say
they are attempting as with their pedagogical strategies for achieving their aims.

(p. 5)

Here, Berlin states he examined authors’ words to interpret curriculum and instruction
development rather than teachers’ words or actions. There seems to be a disconnect
between his research questions and his research methods. For example, teachers’ notes,
journals, and histories have not been described; teachers’ oral histories or memoirs have
not been included; teachers’ lecture notes or responses to student writing are also absent
from the methods description. How does the text examine “actual classroom practice”
without sources like these? Contemporary readers may be thinking about IRB guidelines
and protocol, but for Berlin’s comprehensive study (and for the time period during which
he was writing), IRB protocol is not an issue. Again, Berlin is constructing a
comprehensive text, and he does not enter the classroom. While Berlin’s methods and
analysis were undoubtedly rigorous and reliable, a more in-depth methods section would
have explained to readers why teachers’ and teacher-related artifacts were not consulted
to form an argument about classroom practices. Another area found in contemporary
methods sections is also missing: the text does not include a systematic discussion of how
trends throughout the discipline in particular time periods were uncovered. Although each
chapter is organized around a trend, readers are unaware of how specific analysis led to
trend identification. Contemporary scholars have a variety of tools at their disposal for
identifying key trends, but they cannot know which Berlin utilized because he has not explicitly described them (nor did he need to at the time of writing).

Depending on the theoretical and analytical perspective they adopt, scholars make sense of data in various ways. For example, researchers may use inductive coding schemes with written artifacts to make sense of a particular time period, activity, situation, or text. On the other hand, trends might be sought through a deductive analysis (Connors, 1992; McDowell, 2002). Although Berlin must have had a method for coding data (inductive/deductive), for this particular history (*Rhetoric and Reality*), an explicit discussion of it was not necessary at the time of publication. Was the research begun with a hypothesis followed by deductive coding, or were a research question and inductive coding used instead (Huckin, 2004)? Berlin says he “attempt[ed] throughout to follow rigorous scholarly procedures” (p. 18). What “rigorous scholarly procedures” were employed for this project? Berlin’s claims about the training of writing instructors and their relationships with literary study may be drawn from a deductive method of research. Perhaps Berlin began with a hypothesis about how writing instructors move from a caucus to a developing discipline. Had Berlin approached the data without any hypotheses, he may have found something quite different—perhaps about disgruntled scholars of literature and poetry looking for other outlets of research and passion.

Approaching the data with an hypothesis about what one will find (deductive coding) can be both fruitful and potentially problematic.

On the one hand, as Connors notes (1992), historians have a responsibility to critique their own research and describe their biases to understand the lens through which
they view and write the history. Connors notes that both deductive and inductive historical analyses need to be both externally and internally critiqued (in regards to data and interpretation). Both methods have pros and cons. Deductive coding can be dangerous because it may lead scholars to see what they want to see if they are not careful and critical. On the other hand, such an approach may be fruitful, as scholars recognize their bias and discover their hypotheses are incorrect as they deductively approach a set of artifacts. Both are also true for inductive coding, which means that contemporary scholars need to explicitly discuss either method in order for readers to weigh the pros and cons of choosing one method over another. In either approach, scholars must be cognizant of their motivations and the way their biases affect the patterns they unveil, and their recognition of motivations and bias should be clearly defined in RAD methods discussions.

MacNealy (1999) argues that many modes of scholarship are empirical, using systematic approaches to making sense of data, even when those methods are not explicit. She even claims,

the humanities and the sciences are not so disparate […] if a literary critic were to argue for a new interpretation of why Hamlet sent Ophelia to the nunnery and gave only one line from the play as evidence, the critic would be laughed at by responsible literary scholars. Thus, numbers are important to literary scholars. (p. 5)

MacNealy comments on the importance of empirical methods to a variety of humanities-based disciplines (such as literary studies), demonstrating that not just numbers but an
explicit collection and interpretation of data be undertaken (use of evidence from a text, for example). She contends that scholarship should have explicit methods because without descriptions of systematic analysis, research cannot stand up to the tests of the discipline, and, most importantly, it cannot be replicated. Berlin’s history is probably an empirical RAD study, but without an explicit discussion of methods, readers may not see it as such. What did the procedures of analysis look like? Although Berlin is a trustworthy scholar, what would the methods section of this text look like had it included a more in-depth discussion of the analysis procedures? What would it look like if a scholar were to write it today?

Readers do not have enough information to understand how this history was constructed even though Berlin issues a history that sounds complete. With so many possible questions left unanswered, this project cannot be fully understood according to contemporary standards of methods discussions. To have a clear picture of how data is interpreted and described in the text, readers need to have a clear understanding of how the history was constructed, from project conception to final product. A large portion of any study is its ideological nature. W. H. McDowell (2002) describes written accounts of history as being shaped by the historians who write them: “Each generation of historians has its own preoccupations and values and these may shape their perception of past events: what they see as significant, what they disregard, and what connections they assume between the occurrence of particular events” (p. 5). Berlin’s ideology is woven throughout the text rather than specifically described in the book’s introduction. He claims his main focus “will be on rhetoric” and that his “reading of the rhetorical history
of this period tends to vindicate the position of writing instruction in the college-
curriculum” (p. 1). While there are statements including substantial discussions of
Connors’s ideology throughout the text, readers may easily overlook them or find them
lacking effect as warrants backing the text’s overarching claims.

**Connors’s *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy***

Connors (1997) offers readers a history of the discipline in the vein of Berlin’s
paradigm of writing instruction in American higher education. Rather than using a
chronological approach, as in Berlin’s text, *Composition-Rhetoric* is organized by trends.
The book chapters focus on particular categories (gender influences, shaping tools,
workload, discourse taxonomies, and invention and assignments, to name a few) that
explain and describe composition-rhetoric as an influential paradigm in the discipline’s
history. The introductory chapter of the text includes a narrative of Connors’s connection
to rhetoric. This narrative serves as a basis for his underlying ideology throughout the
book just as it sets the stage for understanding the paradigm. Connors claims the
nineteenth century is largely missing from foundational histories of the field and the
study of rhetoric. His main task in the book, then, is to unearth the rhetorical tradition
(namely, composition-rhetoric) associated with the nineteenth century.

Although Connors’ text is not a narrative, the book is portrayed as an historical
narrative:
I mean here to write a story of people who have studied and taught writing in American schools since the early nineteenth century, to illuminate some elements of that tradition of written rhetoric. I try to show how this composition-rhetoric grew out of and interacted with concurrent cultural trends, as American college and university teaching were shaped by pressures that were economic, political, and theoretical. I mean to […] explore what our theories and techniques of teaching have said about our attitudes toward students, language, and life.

(Connors, 1997, p. 3-4, emphasis added)

In this introductory discussion, Connors describes his purposes rather than a research question. This approach works in Connors’s text and in various contemporary published scholarship. His narrative, while taking the place of a research question, allows readers to expect the use of certain types of methods because readers know certain types of data and methods will work best to get at the research problem. Because the text is a narrative about people’s histories, it is likely that people’s voices would be featured prominently. A historical narrative about people’s lives and cultural trends would logically include human voices via interview transcripts or personal accounts (to specifically get at the “story of people”). In fact, Connors takes the metaphor further: he argues the text is an attempt to “provide a shared past, a story of ancestor. I am trying here to build a fire around which we can sit and discover that we do know the same stories, and dance the same dances” (Connors, 1997, p. 18).
However, when readers look for Connors’s research methods, they do not find a particular discussion. Instead of an explicit methods section, readers receive a description of the project as:

- based on an essentially rationalist and even empirical kind of traditional textual historical research, assumes Aristotelian causality, and accepts a Deweyan pragmatic epistemology. It drifts toward Marxist class analysis now and then, but finally backs away from any overarching theory of history, either progressive or cyclical. The narrative reflects a politics traditionally called liberal. (Connors, 1997, p. 21)

Here, a methods discussion is begun, but much is left to the knowledge of the reader. For novice researchers, these methods are vague at best, confusing and intimidating at worst. The description suggests readers are familiar with rationalist and empirical textual historical research without defining any of these. The importance of describing what these particular methodologies mean in the context of the project is essential to helping the audience understand why and how the information presented makes sense and marks Connors as a trustworthy narrator. This brief methods section has not answered questions such as what textual historical research looks like or what counts as rationalist or empirical. The text briefly suggests a more clear method of analysis in mentioning Aristotelian causality, but it neglects to describe how or why this particular method was chosen: the text does not describe what the affordances of such an approach are or why another approach (systematic coding, for example) would not be more appropriate.
Further, the description of how the data was gathered is incomplete from a contemporary perspective. For a text characterized by the author as a narrative of sorts and a history of people, readers would expect interviews and the use of personal documents or manuscripts as primary sources. In regards to the corpus of data used to craft the text, Connors says,

This book seems, then, to be a narrative based on *found* and on *sought archival materials*, ordered chronologically on the basis of discrete themes, and interrogated—where they are interrogated—from a limited set of consistent questions based on personal observation of things as they are in the present. (p. 22, emphasis added)

Such a corpus seems perfect for the text, yet it is vaguely described. What constitutes the difference—for Connors and for the reader—between found and sought materials? How did Connors begin searching: what did he look for; what did he find that led him to search for other things? Are “found” those uncovered through happenstance? Were “sought” materials obtained through a systematic inquiry? What is the difference for Connors between these two types of archival materials? What counts as archival materials: books, articles, textbooks, oral/recorded histories, teachers’ notes? Are the themes Connors describes organically/inductively constructed? Are they themes he set about looking to find and research? What types of questions did he use to “interrogate” these archival materials? In his 17 pages of notes and throughout reading the text, readers receive a hint of what the archival materials might have been, as well as the questions that guided his analysis, but these hints are not sufficient for contemporary scholars. The
text cannot be considered RAD if readers do not know more about the data and warrants that lead Connors to certain claims.

Throughout the discussions of data collected and methods of analysis, Connors’s ideological underpinnings (evident in even the most quantitative studies) are consistently described. This text, more so than other historical pieces, is careful to make no claim to truth. Instead, with his almost humble discussions of narrative and research practices, Connors presents himself to readers as an engaged investigator. In the introduction’s final paragraph, Connors claims,

I make no pretension, however, to have produced a work of criticism. I hope […] the […] tropes [etc.] I only sketch here or suggest here (or, even more interestingly, fail to sketch or suggest) will be taken up more completely by my partner in crime, the reader. (p. 22)

This comment is indicative of many of Connors’s comments. He inserts this sense of humility into his writing throughout the book, making his ideological perspectives readily apparent. Such an open ideological standpoint is a commonplace among rhetoric and composition historians, and the practice of disclosing a researcher’s standpoint is a practical, purposeful, and important means of describing one’s research. Feminist methods require such ideological disclosure (Kirsch & Ritchie, 2003) as do RAD research methods (Haswell, 2005). Where other authors might erroneously present their historical scholarship as more or less complete and factual (devoid of interpretation), Connors is prepared to describe his history as a construct from his own understanding of the materials, which is an important step in RAD research. This technique of describing
the history is helpful for both researchers and readers alike to understand what constitutes historical projects. The emphasis on interpretation evident in Connors’s work is an element RAD histories should seek to include.


This text has a purpose similar to Berlin’s (1987) text. The authors of this book, working collaboratively, tell composition’s history through the lens of a particular subfield and a particular time period (Hawisher, et al., 1996). For Berlin, the subfield is writing instruction; for Hawisher et al.’s project, the subdiscipline is computers and writing. The authors claim the “book is the story of how computers entered a field, and it is the story of how people in the field used computers. It is also, however, and perhaps at its deepest level, the story of the growth of a community” (p. 2). These opening statements set the tone of the book, linking it to the type of history produced by Berlin (1987) and Connors (1997). In regards to the similarities with Connors’s (1997) text, Hawisher et al. (1996) openly describe the book through the lens of a narrative: this history is a collection of stories pieced together.

Although the authors do not present a cohesive methods section, their methods are more clearly developed than similar texts (as noted in previous paragraphs). This does not

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17 I use the term “subdiscipline” where the authors might use the term “community.” I use the term subdiscipline to allow my discussion in this chapter to align with the language-choices in other chapters as well as my emphasis on my vision of computers and composition as it fits into the larger scheme of the university and other academic institutions. Where I use subdiscipline, readers should remember that my language choice is rhetorical as is the authors’, and the authors may use the term “community” or even “field.”
necessarily make their approach *better*; rather, the more explicit development makes the research findings and interpretations easier for readers to understand and to identify where the interpretations came from. In their introduction, the authors have three interesting sections that denote methods discussions: “Our history, our sources”; “A note on our sources”; and “A note on the book’s structure.” In these three sections, Hawisher et al. outline overarching research methods. Although they are not as specific as novice researchers might prefer (offering a particular example for designing similar studies), these sections describe the theories and methodological viewpoints undergirding their study.

The section “Our history, our sources” is not necessarily a methods section; instead, it outlines more specifically the authors’ ideological standpoints. They describe their own perspectives in this section as well as how the text is constructed as a narrative composed of other people’s stories, both conflicting and complementary. These authors are, as Connors (1997) is, explicit about their ideological underpinnings. They write, “we should remind readers that we are individuals with particular histories, values, and angles of vision” (p. 3). Throughout the text, they consistently remind readers of their viewpoints, emphasizing personal knowledge and knowledge-making as well as subjective interpretations of data. Even as they progress in the introduction chapter, the authors continue to shine a consistent light on the ideologies backing their work (and interwoven throughout it). They write, “As historians writing in the mid 1990s, we recognize that the set of narratives presented here is not objective and that it cannot be the whole truth” (p. 8). Hawisher et al. put forth this text as interpretive work with an
emphasis on only one understanding of computers and writing’s development as a subdiscipline. Their descriptive approach indicates how the discipline’s historical studies have developed to include more explicit methods discussions. Earlier scholars (such as Berlin)—informed by the disciplinary norm of the time—were not as interested in this sort of discussion. The authors also describe their own stories and identities: “Of the four of us, none came to computers as programmers or as interface designers; we all came to computers as teachers” (p. 3). This personal interest in the subdiscipline is meant to help readers understand the theoretical and ideological position of the text, a technique frequently praised in feminist methodologies (Sullivan, 2003).

In “A note on our sources,” Hawisher et al. begin to describe their methods. This section centers on the types of data that made its way into the data set. The authors say they “tried to cast a wide net and thereby include as broad a range of sources as possible” (p. 10) and that they “read through much of the printed literature of composition studies and computers and composition studies, looking for trends and developments” (p. 10-11). To this end, the authors describe reviewing an undisclosed number of scholarly articles and textbooks, conference proceedings, conference presentations, and “interviews with a range of people in the field, including pioneers, experienced computer-using teachers, and teacher-scholars who are in or just emerging from PhD programs and are now beginning to shape the field” (p. 11). This description of artifacts is quite broad and suggests Hawisher et al., like Berlin (1987) and Connors (1997), are attempting to be comprehensive in their treatment of the subdiscipline’s history. Readers see in their list some of the artifacts that speak to narratives of lived experiences. Although a list of
primary sources is included in this section, the discussion of how many sources were reviewed is not included. As part of a systematic approach to historical inquiry, rhetoric and composition historians might review estimates of how many documents (and of which types) they reviewed to heighten accountability and show the RAD qualities of their research. Even comprehensible studies are narrowed down to a particular corpus, and contemporary readers are aware and interested in that corpus in ways previous readers may not have been.

Hawisher et al. also use the section “A note on our sources” to explain what is missing or “left out” of the text (p. 11) in terms of the primary sources the text draws on. They write about the narratives they did not solicit: graduate students, emeritus scholars, administrators, deans, provosts, grant writers, department secretaries, grant-giving entities and non-profit organizations do not fit into this history. The authors claim these people and entities have directly influenced the formation and shape of the subdiscipline, but they are not the focus of the text. Instead, the section reiterates an ideological backing:

The history(ies) offered here represents our perspective: that of four teachers and scholars who have participated in the work of the field and who have been moved to write a history—not the history, but a history—of the field’s emergence and early years. (pp. 11-12)

The authors acknowledge the sources they chose to leave out of this piece and make explicit their reasons for doing so, in contrast to the less explicit ideological underpinnings seen in texts like Berlin’s. Although Hawisher et al.’s statement serves to
refocus readers on the authors’ perspectives, it also helps readers understand why other voices may have been left out. Whereas Berlin’s (1987) ideology may have been implicit, Hawisher et al.’s discussion of ideology infers other voices and other ideologies are left out of the text on purpose, allowing the text to focus on the ideological backgrounds of composition instructors. Readers might still prefer a more specific statement about why the individual voices of the authors are, according to Hawisher et al., a more interesting history to review rather than a history taking into account administrative and logistical activities allowing computers and writing to coalesce and be recognized or even the voices of other scholars left out of this particular history.

The third methods section, “A note on the book’s structure,” describes the book’s format, which is also similar to Berlin’s (1987). The text is organized by two-year increments (except the first chapter, which covers four years) and the trends emerging in those years. In addition to being transparent about the ideologies underpinning the text, Hawisher et al. are transparent about the chronological structure of the book. They describe problems with using this approach, namely the difference between the two fields of study that combine to create the history: education and technology. The authors claim the two fields have drastically different rates of change, which created some problems in writing the history. However, their discussion also demonstrates the particular choices they made to circumvent the problems associated with a chronological structure. Their second major hurdle was that a chronological history often makes change and growth appear static rather than dynamic (p. 13).
By making readers aware of these two constraints (multiple fields of study and apparently static growth and development rates), Hawisher et al. attempt to circumvent the problems. After reviewing the introduction, readers may keep these overarching ideas in mind throughout their reading. The authors also describe particular choices to include individual narratives. Rather than knowing they wanted to write a chronological history right away, the authors describe considering writing a history of “‘great’ individuals who had a particular impact on our field,” and ultimately explain this idea was so interesting to them, it lead the authors to include full and excerpted interviews and narratives at the end of each chronological section (p. 12). Their inclusion of particular voices via narratives and interviews is particularly interesting considering their emphasis on personal histories and the narrativity of the subdiscipline’s development. While many histories might attempt to produce such narrative histories—and even claim to produce them—a lack of human voice (interviews, personal writings, etc.) reduces the viability of such a narrative. Hawisher et al. have used the human voice to complicate the history in a relevant manner, enriching the history and meeting the authors’ purposes for the text.

Although Hawisher et al. describe how they chose data materials and how they outlined the book, there are two elements contemporary scholars might still look for in their methods discussion: a clear analysis scheme and a discussion of how collaboration influenced the research and writing process. Hawisher et al. mention “looking for trends and developments” (p. 11) without describing that process in detail. While appropriate for the time, contemporary researchers might be interested to know if there was a coding scheme or what particular analytic tools were employed, especially for a collaborative
history. With four authors, how does an analysis come to fruition? Was an hypothesis put forth? Were coding schemes used? Were they deductive or inductive? Was content analysis or perhaps discourse analysis utilized? What were the logistics of such an undertaking? How were reliable codes developed? What did finding trends look like between authors? The authors may have left the answers to these questions out of their text to make room for the interesting analysis they write, but contemporary scholars (and editors) would be interested in these answers, especially because collaborative research and analysis call for explicit discussions of methods due to the degree of balance, negotiation, and compromise researchers must engage in to craft the study. The collaborative nature of Hawisher et al.’s (1996) history seems to both strengthen and detract from it at various points throughout the text. A contemporary re-writing of such a history of computers and writing might include a discussion of the difficulties and techniques used to write a collaborative history in order to provide an understanding of how the history developed.

Often (though not always), the intensive library-research needed to produce a careful, attentive history is left out of methods discussions in histories of the discipline because such library-research is sometimes taken for granted. While we might think of archival research as library research, the two are not always synonymous. To find information about the field, Hawisher et al. turned to foundational journals, conferences, and people, which is a strong tactic. However, they do not describe the process of unearthing and rediscovering the history of technology. The move from punch card computers to keyboards, the generation of the first industrial and personal computers, the
adaptation of bringing computers onto campuses: all of these issues and more are described by Hawisher et al., yet how this information was identified is not noted in the methods sections. How does a researcher track down the culturally pertinent types of information that are a tangential part of that history? This question is left unanswered for readers who are curious about the context of the history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Affordances</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin (1987), <em>Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985</em></td>
<td>Builds an overarching history of the discipline with a focus on how writing instruction developed and shifted</td>
<td>“hundreds of articles on scholarly journals on literature, writing, and education, and numerous theoretical treatises and textbooks” (p. 18).</td>
<td>Mentions data; mentions ideological underpinnings</td>
<td>Non-RAD; no description of data collection or narrowing; no discussion of “rigorous scholarly procedures” (p. 18); no discussion of primary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connors (1997), <em>Composition-Rhetoric</em></td>
<td>Fills the void of 19th century rhetoric via discussion of composition-rhetoric as a paradigm of knowledge in the discipline; craft a narrative of the field</td>
<td>Archival material, textbooks, scholarly articles</td>
<td>Brief description of analysis (rationalist, empirical textual historical research, Aristotelian causality)</td>
<td>Non-RAD; no description of how corpus was narrowed; analysis discussion is incomplete; primary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawisher et al. (1996), <em>Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994</em></td>
<td>Explains the subdiscipline of computers and writing, describe close connection of computers and writing classrooms</td>
<td>Interviews, scholarly articles/books, conference proceedings, conference presentations/abstracts</td>
<td>Thorough discussion of ideological backing and sources, primary sources prominent in chapters</td>
<td>Analysis methods are not clearly described, outside sources are not clearly defined</td>
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Table one (above) illustrates my previous description of methods employed in the three foundational sources. Keeping this description and the texts from Berlin (1987), Connors (1997), and Hawisher et al. (1993) in mind, the next section describes what is often left unsaid in historical inquiry and establishes guidelines for explicitly stating that which is left unsaid. In order to develop strong, contemporary historical inquiries, explicit discussions of historical methods are necessary. This framework presents a heuristic for readers and novice researchers to follow, demonstrating in what ways historical research
can be presented as a reliable, sound narrative explaining a historical situation from a particular standpoint (Haswell, 2005).

**Frameworks for historical inquiry**

When rhetoric and composition scholars publish in academic venues, their research is introduced in different ways. For example, some journals require authors to state their research questions explicitly while other venues allow writers to begin with an argument or series of claims. *Written Communication* expects authors to describe methods in detail beginning with research questions (Smagorinsky, 2008), and the journal’s editorial policy states, “Published articles will collectively represent a wide range of methodologies, but the methodology of each study must be handled expertly” (*Written Communication*, 2012). Even *College English* insists on explicit methods: “Submissions should either add new knowledge or challenge received opinion through a well-defined inquiry into one of the above areas” which include “history, theory, and practice(s) of: rhetoric and composition studies, literacy, literature, linguistics, media/technology, and creative writing, as well as other related professional issues” (*College English*, 2012). While *Written Communication* emphasizes that “methodology […] be expertly handled,” *College English* suggests a less strict approach to methods, as long at the study is a “well-defined inquiry.” Cindy Johanek (2000) discusses the discipline’s division over methodological concerns, particularly from the perspective of
empirical versus humanist research. This division, she points out, has created an ongoing
debate within the discipline for decades. Haswell (2005) also comments on the
disconnect between types of research conducted and published in the discipline,
lamenting the turn away from RAD research. Johanek further discusses the need for a
contextualist paradigm of research methodologies: one that is based on research questions
and evidentiary support, not which types of evidence are preferable or better aligned with
the vast interests of the discipline.

While the discipline has been engaged in various types of research from
qualitative to quantitative, from empirical to anecdotal, Johanek (2000) argues the
various frameworks have been pitted against each other. Instead of arguing for one
particular type of research framework, Johanek sets forth a discussion of a contextualist
research paradigm that embraces all forms of the discipline’s research. She describes a
contextualist research paradigm for rhetoric and composition as “one that focuses our
attention not on form or politics, but on the processes of research that naturally produce
varied forms in the varied research contexts we encounter in our work” (p. 27). Johanek
argues embracing a contextualist paradigm for research design is “necessary to conduct
the research our discipline so greatly needs” (p. 7). For Johanek, the contextualist
paradigm is a means of understanding in which epistemologies research interpretations
are based.

As is any scholarly inquiry (including quantitative inquiry), historical inquiry is
an interpretive account of research conducted. Researchers should be conscious of their
subjective interest in the research question, and those interests need to be made explicit
Both MacNealy (1999) and Johanek (2000) describe the need to have methods that help researchers accurately answer their research questions. Smagorinsky (2008) describes the need to have explicit methods to help readers understand where the conclusions came from and what data supports them. For Takayoshi, Tomlinson, and Castillo (forthcoming), understanding where research questions come from is also an important issue. They claim, “If researchers are to be in control of their research practice, it’s crucial to explore (and understand) the roles our epistemological, political, and ideological assumptions and commitments, as well as our experiences and knowledge, play in the shaping of our problems and questions” (p. 2).

These epistemological, political, and ideological assumptions influence both the research question and the methods used to approach and answer that question. Researchers, then, must be open about their questions so that they may accurately answer their questions rather than forcing their research down a pathway that is less meaningful or useful.

With a solid understanding of research questions, scholars can begin to conduct replicable historical inquiries. Haswell (2005) crafts a replicable historical inquiry by uncovering scholarship in the field to identify trends of scholarship over time (in regards to what types of scholarship are published more frequently than others). He uses a specific discussion of methods to ensure the project’s replicability. Haswell describes not only his coding system but also his use of inter-rater reliability. His claim about the “current war on scholarship” is supported by specifically collected and coded data. His scholarship is replicable (I can reproduce the study, if I want to), aggregable (as time passes, new iterations of the study can easily build on the original), and data-supported.
(via a particular system of coded research). While Haswell (2005) does not explicitly describe his piece as an historical inquiry, the article *does* describe the history of research in the discipline. Because his methods are so clearly articulated, other scholars can quickly understand where his conclusions come from and what evidence he has to support those conclusions (Smagorinsky, 2008).

After outlining a research question and determining if that question poses an historical question, researchers can begin to construct and design their project to answer the overarching research question(s). The first step for historical inquiry is determining what artifacts are necessary to answer the research question. Different research questions are best answered by using different artifacts and different analytical methods. For example, if researchers are interested in how teachers express or perceive shifts in institutional mandates over time, the best methods to employ would include surveys, focus groups, or interviews, which get teachers talking about their perceptions and emotions towards the shift. If what researchers are interested in is related to how *CCCC* has changed in the past 40 years, a content-based analysis of the conference’s programs and proceedings would help answer the question; interviews and focus groups would be less useful.

As discussed in the previous analysis of Hawisher et al.’s (1996) text, primary sources are pivotal for conducting historical inquiry because these sources provide researchers a means of connecting the present with the past. Hawisher et al. (1996) bring primary texts into their research. In rhetoric and composition, few scholars draw attention to their primary sources. Although Hawisher et al. (1996) describe conducting interviews
and include large excerpts of their interviews at the end of each chapter, many other scholars simply refer to interviewees and their statements in passing. Other primary sources go largely unaccounted for unless the study explaining or analyzing those documents must first summarize those documents (as Haas and Witte, 2001, describe the texts they analyze in “Writing as an Embodied Practice”). As Boquet’s (1999) text demonstrates, much of rhetoric and composition’s historical inquiries are focused on using secondary sources and later accounts to construct images of the past and shifting trends. The discipline still relies largely on such rhetoric and composition historians as Berlin and Connors. While their work should inform our current practices and inevitably informs our ideologies, these important pieces should be paired with primary sources new historians uncover. Examinations of our history cannot be conducted without careful attention to building foundations on primary sources.

Although Connors (1997) does not include interviews as Hawisher et al. (1996) do, he does include primary sources in the form of teachers’ lecture notes. Likewise, Hawisher et al. (1996) include conference proceedings, which are primary sources that directly express information about the conferences they describe. These primary sources are invaluable for historical research of the discipline. Very rarely will particular interviews be available as primary sources, especially if the research question takes scholars back beyond the oldest living generation. Boquet (1999) relies on a few primary sources from the archives (a newspaper article, for example), but her text is largely based on secondary sources. The texts reviewed in Boquet’s study demonstrate concepts about writing center theory and educational practice, not about the physical movements and
institutional shifts centers underwent during the pre- and post-open admissions eras. As the discipline’s historical presence increases as we accumulate years in institutions of higher education, primary sources such as interviews will be harder to find, and so a broader understanding of primary sources and their availability (such as that described by Connors, 1992) is needed.

Because the types of documents used are important to the quality of research, scholars engaged in historical inquiry should be transparent about how they tracked down their research. Connors (1992) describes how scholars may rummage through an archive, exploring the archive inductively to generate source material. With many archives digitizing their collections (either their catalogues or the actual artifacts), this method of rummaging to locate sources is becoming less and less useful. Happenstance discoveries of teachers’ notes in margins or students’ scribbles in textbooks can no longer be located during searches in digitized archives, which are typically digital databases (often not including digital copies of the manuscripts, etc., but just a digital listing of what sources the archives hold) (Ramsey et al., 2010).

With digital archives, specific research questions and ideas about specific types of texts to locate are especially important for scholars. The processes of searching archives can shift significantly depending on the form of the archive. Some digital archives can even give researchers new ways of understanding archival material once they’ve found it. Tools like DEVONthink, for example, revolutionize data organization and analysis while safely storing retrieved sources. These types of personal databases make analysis possible
in ways that were previously time consuming or difficult (i.e., finding every instance of a particular word, phrase, or collocation of phrases in an organization’s archived minutes).

Glenn and Enoch (2010) argue, “Rarely do researchers identify an archive and hope to find a research project in it. Instead, they begin with a broad research question and then read widely and deeply until they begin to identify an outline of significance or basis of investigation for the project at hand” (p. 13). Glenn and Enoch go on to suggest the hard work of archival searches is not as serendipitous as Connors (1991, 1992) and Boquet (1999) would make it seem; Ramsey et al. (2010) even go so far as to critique Connors’s (1992) discussion of archival research, suggesting his “depiction of archives and the lighthearted approach Connors recommends are likely not very helpful to the archival researcher” who is bound by the particular constraints of her work and the archives (p. 2-3). The research question, then, points scholars in the right direction to find sources—both primary and secondary—that will help scholars define their project and, ultimately, answer their questions. Although serendipitous discoveries are still possible in a digitized archive database (especially those with digital renditions of their archived materials), the likelihood of stumbling upon certain artifacts—such as glossed notes in a textbook or letters to students and provosts slipping out of an instructor’s guidebook—are much less likely. These are the types of happenstance findings archivists are typified as living for (Ede and Lunsford, 2003), but this depiction is no longer an accurate description of the work archival historians engage in or the exciting discoveries they might make. Instead, a new or developing technology may replace the “marginal comments” and other happenstance “found” items. For example, comments on blogs or
archived revisions on wikis may all become areas ripe for data mining as the digital humanities expand. Even tags and hash tags\textsuperscript{18} might be used as sources of data, being that authors include them as marginal, categorizing comments and notations.

Defining the corpus of data is just as important as tracking down the data. Scholars must think carefully about what documents they will need to answer their questions and why those documents answer their questions. This stage of the research process may lead researchers to rethink necessary documents. Hawisher et al. (1996) may have begun writing their text with a compilation of documents about computers and writing, but they would have realized early on that they needed to expand their search. Stating which documents were originally chosen and why helps readers understand the project in more depth while allowing the researcher to see what holes exist in the research. Additionally, when writing histories, there are so many available documents that the corpus must be narrowed. Why does Berlin (1987) focus on articles and books? Why do Hawisher et al. (1996) use conference proceedings and interviews from particular types of people? Knowing the answers to these kinds of questions helps readers make judgments about the credibility and strength or force of the work presented. Knowing how scholars refined their corpus allows peers to vet the scholarship. Without knowledge of where the corpus came from and how it was chosen, the project cannot be seen as RAD scholarship. Without knowing where the data came from or how the scholar

\textsuperscript{18} Tags are typically used to categorize blog posts and entries and are typically composed of short phrases or single words that describe the content of a post. For example, a blog about cooking may use the tags “frying pan,” “exotic spices,” or “baking.” Hash tags fulfill a similar role, but are typically used for tweets and other SMS social networking and blogging tools (i.e., Facebook posts). Tweets may include hash tags (typically initiated with a pound symbol [\#]) for the same purposes. For example, a tweet might read: “I went to see the newest Harry Potter movie #deathlyhallows.”
decided to use that data as the primary means for answering her research questions, the project cannot support or sustain itself (Johanek, 2000). Haswell (2005) argues that data that is not specifically discussed (in terms of collection) cannot endure. With RAD historical scholarship, new histories might be written, might be more credible, and might be more enduring than previous historical studies.

If holes in the data do exist, especially if they concern larger cultural or societal trends, researchers have the obligation to push further and search broadly for contributing sources (though, of course, such sources may not exist). Connors (1992) describes certain sources as field-specific archival materials and others as non-field specific. The non-field specific materials are those materials scholars may not see in their field; they are outside sources from other disciplines shedding light on the research question in some way. These materials might open “possibilities for new perspectives and voices,” enriching our histories (Glenn & Enoch, 2010, p. 13). In order to discover these types of sources, though, researchers cannot simply wander the archives, browse the stacks in the library, or scour the Internet with no hint of what to look for. When outside sources are needed, it is best to go to knowledgeable, reliable sources: reference librarians and colleagues in other disciplines can be the first step in tracking down sources that meaningfully contribute to the project.

Although collecting sources—primary and secondary, field-specific and outsider sources—can be intimidating, daunting, and difficult (especially considering the need for travel: see Glenn & Enoch, 2010), making sense of the data may take researchers far more time. There are a wide variety of analytical methods available to rhetoric and
compositionists. We are in the unique position to be both humanists and empiricists, both humanities scholars and social scientists (Johanek, 2000). Gaillet (2010) suggests, even with a broad range of techniques at our disposal, many scholars are unprepared for analytic research in the archives:

there is little codified information on archival research that we, as a profession, offer new scholars. […] as a result, many of us visit archives initially equipped with little training in procedures for investigating primary works and few tools for analyzing what we might find in those repertoires. (p. 29)

Though some rhetoric and composition scholars may lack training in regards to locating archival materials or working within the actual archives, the discipline does expect scholars to be experts in library-based research, which is useful for historical research and archival undertakings. On the other hand, Galliet (2010) claims we have little training for analyzing appropriate archival material once it has been located and secured.

Connors (1992) urges rhetoric and composition historians to think critically about their interpretations. He says historians need to pay more attention to two critical questions regarding their work: “Does this interpretation of the historical data seem coherent, reliable, interesting, useful? What can this interpretation of the past show us about the present and the future?” (p. 231). I would add to Connors’s (1992) list of critical awareness a prior question: is this research/analysis rigorous? Johanek (2000) helps us understand that there have been multiple shifts in the discipline, from interests in quasi-qualitative, anecdotal or lore-based research to studies using qualitative and empirical research methodologies. Yet, RAD scholarship is far from being pervasive in
the discipline, where lore, anecdote, and scant methods sections still prevail in published scholarship (not just historical studies). Historical inquiry is not immune to the tests of scholarship, so researchers must be prepared to defend the rigor and reliability of their research.

Before scholars are able to answer Connors’s (1992) questions about the histories they’ve written, they need to ask in what ways the data they collect (whether it be through primary or secondary sources) would best be analyzed. Connors (1992) describes using a deductive approach to analyzing data. He suggests historians enter the archives with a hypothesis and says, “Archival reading is, instead, a kind of directed ramble [in regards to this hypothesis]. There are various concurrent intentions in it” (p. 23). Deductive coding, however, is not the only way to approach an archive or begin writing a history, as previously described. The intentions Connors describes revolve around the researcher’s question: any information pertaining to it, information about time periods and people, “fascinating anomalies,” “unexpected treasures,” and moments where historical evidence meets the historian’s perceptions (p. 24). Rather than an analysis, per say, Connors suggests using a synthesis to make claims and build theories about the historical materials reviewed. Stahl and Hartman (2004) also suggest beginning historical research with an hypothesis, and they describe data analysis as “analyzing and interpreting the evidence” (p. 183). In their discussion, though, Stahl and Hartman do not explain how evidence is to be analyzed; they only suggest historians should remain cognizant of their own perceptions of the data.
As noted above, historical research has often been described as deductive. With a variety of research methods to draw from, rhetoric and composition scholars can approach historical inquiry as deductive or inductive, as qualitative or quantitative, as empirical or anecdotal (though I recommend the former, not the latter). No claims can be substantiated without evidence. For rhetoric and composition historians to produce rigorous, RAD research, evidence cannot be just anything: evidence must come from particular data sets designed to get at answers to particular questions. In other words, the data and analytical methods must meet the needs of the research question(s). To avoid criticisms of unsubstantiated claims, rhetoric and composition histories can be constructed with explicit analyses, beginning with research questions, moving through data collection, and ending with methods of analysis (and rationales for applying those analyses). Gilderhus (2003) suggests historical research across disciplines has become more and more rigorous. An empirical, historical inquiry utilizes a specific method (or a mix of methods) of analysis. For example, when Connors (1992) suggests developing a theory, it sounds like he is referring to a systematic analysis of some kind, but his system is not articulated for readers: they are not able to replicate it because they are not really sure what the process of analysis was.

Many texts discuss historical inquiry as a search for patterns relying primarily on evaluating collected evidence (artifacts) collected (Stahl & Hartman, 2004; Connors, 1992). Stahl and Hartman (2004), echoing Connors (1992), suggest evidence should be evaluated for its credibility as a reliable source and for the researcher’s bias against the evidence. If what historians are interested in understanding is an underpinning theory
explaining all the trends in the data, then grounded theory is an appropriate method of
analysis because this method allows researchers to inductively build a theory to describe
trends in a data set (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). On the other hand, if a researcher is more
interested in the trends themselves rather than a core theory explaining the trends,
context-sensitive text analysis or content analysis are more appropriate methods of
understanding the data (Huckin, 1992; 2002; 2004). Still other models of analysis remain,
such as discourse analysis (Gee, 2009), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003),
socio-linguistic analysis (Gee, 2011), rhetorical analysis (Selzer, 2004), correlational data
analysis (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992), linguistic analysis (Halliday, 1984) or a more
general, inductive, research-project specific coding system analysis (Grant-Davie, 1992).

**Conclusion**

Foundational historical studies—such as Berlin’s (1987), Hawisher et al.’s (1996),
and Connors’s (1997)—lack explicit methods discussions. The methods discussions these
texts include are brief and comprehensive, which fit the needs of the medium (book-
length projects), the purposes of the studies, and the needs of the audiences reading the
studies. Contemporary readers may approach these texts through a different lens: one that
values explicit discussions of data collection and analysis and both empirical and
humanist research methodologies. As noted previously, the foundational texts analyzed
earlier are use appropriate methods and appropriate discussions of those methods for the
time and context of their writing. However, contemporary rhetoric and composition
historians need to begin thinking critically about methodologies. RAD research methods,
for example, can benefit the humanist work rhetoric and composition historians often
engage in. RAD methods can also enable historians to utilize empirical and social
scientist methods. More importantly, contemporary historians in rhetoric and composition
have a different type of audience to write for. As Smagorinsky (2008) suggests, today’s
rhetoric and composition scholars and audiences look for explicit methods sections.
Contemporary historians need to meet the needs of this audience, explaining their
methods in more explicit detail than previous scholars have done.

Because much of the literature on historical methods simply instructs researchers
to “analyze data,” novice researchers can be particularly unsure of how to analyze data.
As L’Eplatteneir (2009) demonstrates, graduate education and scholarly literature about
methods are not sufficient to prepare new historical scholars to engage in rigorous
historical inquiry. Presenting specific analytic methods as acceptable, appropriate, and
preferable techniques for making sense of a large pool of data will not only strengthen the
research practices of upcoming scholars, but it will also strengthen the historical inquiry
conducted in the field, bolstering our history while enhancing the quality of our published
research via the production of accurate—or at least replicable—scholarship. Such
scholarship can offer both more complete and more complex histories of the discipline,
pushing the discipline to endure by evolving from a rich foundation of knowledge.

In the next chapter, I describe how I followed a framework similar to what I’ve
outlined above to uncover a history of new media within rhetoric and composition
studies. I explain my methods from start to finish, making explicit my method for data
collection, corpus criteria, and data analysis. I present Chapter 3 as an example to novice
researchers to assist them in understanding what a rigorous historical inquiry is
comprised of as well as an example of how historical inquiry can be framed and conducted as RAD scholarship (Haswell, 2005).
Chapter 3

A RAD Rhetoric and Composition Historical Study

Connors (1992) writes, “historical research uses methods more closely related to traditional humanities inquiry than to scientific or social-scientific paradigms” (p. 15). Throughout his chapter “Dreams and Play” in Methods and Methodology in Composition Research, Connors helps readers understand the careful nature of historical inquiry. He gives readers a framework for conducting historical research, but from the eyes of a scholar approaching history from a contemporary, empirical standpoint rather than a humanistic perspective (as Connors did), Connors’s framework seems vague, referring to “perceptions,” “assemblages,” and “prejudices” (p. 15). Connors advises scholars to begin with a research question about a historical problem or interest, develop a hypothesis, then approach a group of primary and secondary texts with an eye for proving or disproving that hypothesis through subjective interpretation. Connors says, “What we do is browse with directed intention. There is a track, constraint exercised by the [...] hypothesis” followed by either proving or disproving the hypothesis (p. 25). Such a framework is conceptual rather than concrete. With past historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition largely following frameworks similar to the one Connors describes, historical research in the discipline has been more humanistic in its methods. As noted in Chapter 2, RAD research (Haswell, 2005) is an acceptable and encouraged framework for
contemporary research in rhetoric and composition, even when it comes to historical inquiry.

Rhetoric and composition historical inquiry is not as distant from the contemporary social-scientific paradigm as it was in the 1990s. As I argued in the previous chapter, historical inquiry can gain much if research methods from the social-scientific paradigm are used to interpret data. Where once we approached historical studies in the field from a humanistic perspective, we can now also embrace empirical methods as a means of conducting historical inquiry. Specifically, historical studies in the field gain much from social-science methods that are replicable, aggregable, and data-supported (Haswell, 2005). Connors has argued, “history is not, and never has been, systematic or scientific” (1992, p. 31). However, the previous chapter offered insights into how social-scientific methods of analysis (many commonly used in rhetoric and composition scholarship) can appropriately be utilized to analyze historical data and craft arguments about the history of writing and the discipline. This RAD research can, at the least, complement the humanistic approach.

In this chapter, I explain a framework rhetoric and composition scholars can use to craft empirical historical inquiries, describing the process by which the history of “new media” definitions were analyzed in the present study. First, I describe why such a project is historical inquiry. Then, I explain the specific methods utilized in the study: methods that make it both an historical and a social-scientific—replicable, aggregable, and data-supported—study. In explaining my research methods, I first discuss my research questions. Next, I describe my methods of data analysis in three distinct processes:
1. I articulate my methods of data collection and the process by which I narrowed my corpus of texts (the data set).

2. I explain my first analysis process, which is tied to one of my overarching research questions. This analysis is applied to the entire corpus of articles.

3. I explain my second analysis process, which is tied to the second overarching research question. In this analysis, I look particularly at definitions of “new media” (as described later in this chapter) from within the data set.

This three-step approach may seem repetitive at times because the first analysis and the second analysis are similar types of analyses. However, each analysis was completed separately and distinctly, allowing me to discover answers to two different research questions.

**What constitutes historical inquiry?**

Historical inquiries in rhetoric and composition scholarship draw on multiple frameworks of historical inquiry while making claims about the discipline’s history based on various objects of study, as noted in the previous chapter. Historical inquiries are typically used to answer certain types of research questions, getting at the discipline’s trends over time, the emergence of the discipline, the fragmenting of the discipline into various subdisciplines, and understanding how shifts in trends over time lead to the development of new (sub)disciplines. All of these studies are historical inquiry, and they all offer a perspective on how rhetoric and composition functions as a discipline within modern American universities and colleges. In order to examine the discipline from so
many angles, different objects are investigated, from archived texts and teacher manuscripts to conference proceedings and textbook genres.

Although my study does not seek to examine the formation of rhetoric and composition or computers and writing, historical inquiry helps to unravel the beginning of a concept’s incorporation into rhetoric and composition via computers and writing. In this respect, the study is an historical, archival inquiry,\(^\text{19}\) tracing the beginning of a specialization, one that might eventually lead to a new subdiscipline or change the trajectory of computers and writing. The project examines a shift over time (2000-2010) because, over the course of this decade, concepts about writing have shifted to include new media as a form of writing. This study, then, traces the beginning of a specialization as well as the shift of language, terminology, and focus in computers and writing over the past ten years. Similar to Knievel’s (2009) study—“What is Humanistic about Computers and Writing? Historical Patterns and Contemporary Possibilities for the Field”—the present study examines concepts. By reviewing articles as primary sources,\(^\text{20}\) concepts emerge as objects of study. These concepts emerge through textual utterances—through the material prose of the journal articles—comprised of explicit conversations, concepts, key terms, and definitions, all of which are more abstract than material. Because concepts emerge through textual utterances, this project examines published prose in scholarly

\(^{19}\) I define the project as archival research because I uncover the archaeology of a concept and key term within the discipline and the computers and writing subdiscipline via archives of primary sources (as described in Chapter 2, for certain types of research questions, scholarly articles are primary sources), which is “archival retrieval” (Connors, 1992, p. 15).

\(^{20}\) As described in various sections throughout this chapter, scholarly articles serve as primary sources for historical, archival inquiry where the research question is posed in such a way that the articles themselves are the primary artifacts and act as primary constructions of theoretical discussions within the discipline (Connors, 1991).
journals. Most of the data set is easily obtained digitally or through hard-copy journals. However, some of the data—for example, the articles that come from *Kairos*, as described later in this chapter—is only digital. The study centers on *ideas* and *definitions* of “new media,” which can be studied through published prose.

The status of the subdiscipline (computers and writing) is not the central focus of this project, but an understanding of how rhetoric and composition and computers and writing have incorporated a particular concept into their areas of theory and praxis is at the center of the study. The subdiscipline of computers and writing is a key area where discussions of “new media” arise. Because computers and writing is the area where discussions of media and modes of communication (especially digital) are most likely to occur, an analysis featuring articles from journals in this subdiscipline is extremely important. Scholars cannot study “new media” without stepping into computers and writing territory.

Archival inquiry also relies on primary sources. What constitutes a primary source varies by scholar and by research question; however, Connors (1991) describes four overarching types of primary sources: interviews, textbooks, scholarly articles and magazines, and professional books. Using his definition of primary sources for the discipline, the data I use—scholarly articles—are primary sources. Daly Goggin (2009) also states scholarly journals “provide an important window on disciplinary discursive practices” (p. 215) because they are “legitimizing mechanisms” of the discipline (p. 336). As for Daly Goggin, journals and journals articles are direct representations of the concepts I aim to uncover. When rhetoric and composition’s historical inquiries focus on
research questions about the development of a discipline, scholarly articles and textbooks are considered primary sources because they are firsthand accounts of the discipline’s development. According to Connors (1991, 1992), articles are primary sources for some research questions. Because my research questions focus on the abstractions and concepts surrounding new media in rhetoric and composition, scholarly articles are the primary means of how those particular abstractions are and were conveyed to the larger discipline. Because they are the primary means of disseminating such ideas, these articles are primary sources for this project. There is no better indicator of the discipline’s development than the published research contributing to and describing these shifts.

Throughout this project, I draw heavily on theories of archival research and historical inquiry. Looking to Connors (1981, 1983, 1991, 1992) and Berlin (1987) for examples of historical inquiry, I recognize the overlap of archival research with historical inquiry within rhetoric and composition. Retracing the history of the discipline has much to do with uncovering data from the past and seeing it in a new light. *Working in the Archives*, by editors Ramsey, Sharer, L’Eplattenier, and Mastrangelo (2010) demonstrates a new understanding of archival research in the discipline. Their text covers topics such as using and accessing the archives, working with archival materials, and reviewing archival research as a research process. Interestingly, this text is not a historian’s book; rather, it is a text constructed for rhetoric and composition historians (novice and more advanced). In their chapters, “Viewing the Archives: The Hidden and the Digital” and “Searching and Seeking in the Deep Web: Primary Sources on the
Internet,” Ramsey (2010) and Yakel (2010) (respectively) move archival research out of the basement and onto the library’s main floor (or the historian’s sofa) via the internet.

Ramsey (2010) argues that many archival or special collections are actually comprised of three separate archives: the visible, the hidden, and the digital (p.79). She goes on to suggest that this has been the case for years: archivists can only fully process so many materials at one time. The archival process could take years of appraisals and restoration for some materials. Therefore, the materials that are technically part of the collection but have not yet been fully processed constitute the hidden archive. Ramsey suggests the third archive—the digital archive—is helping to make more materials from hidden archives a part of the visible archives: “Another way archivists are actively working to make collections both more accessible and more widely available is through digitizing certain collections or key parts of collections” (p. 83). Though Ramsey suggests digitization can help protect fragile or torn documents, she maintains, “only certain items may be fully digitized” (p. 84), limiting the import digital archives may have for research and special collections. Further, Ramsey claims, “If digitizing is causing a renegotiation of the archival space, digitizing is also reinterpreting the relationship between archivists and researchers” (p. 86), blurring the boundaries between these types of work.

Yakel (2010) echoes some of the same concerns Ramsey (2010) voices. For example, she begins her argument stating, “archival materials are often considered to be part of the ‘deep Web,’ that portion of the Internet not easily indexed by search engines and therefore difficult to retrieve” (p. 102). This is similar to the problem Ramsey (2010)
addresses in terms of invisible archives. The materials exist and are stored (in some way) to be viewed, but they are exceedingly difficult to find and investigate. Further, Yakel says, “Most archives and special collections have a Web presence. The completeness and navigability of these sites vary considerably” (p. 103). Such variability is in part due to the nature of digitized materials and in part due to what site designers and their clients want in their web presence. For example, some collections seek to digitize all of their documents, like the Digital Initiatives @ Purdue University Libraries Project, while others only wish to include a catalogue or inventory of materials (often with a digital system for requesting the materials) (Ramsey, 2010; Yakel, 2010). The theories of archival research informing historical inquiry in rhetoric and composition complement this project. I have conducted archival research to collect my data, and understanding my data as primary sources allows me to uncover the development of “new media” in the discipline.

As described in Chapter 2, Connors (1992) reminds rhetoric and composition historians, “No historian is free from prejudiced ideas, but no historian wishes to try for anything less than fair presentation of her finding” (p. 21). Connors hopes that all scholars are openly aware and critical of their prejudices. However, as demonstrated in chapter two and as in the social and hard sciences, this is not always the case. While historians may briefly suggest their ideological underpinnings—as Berlin (1987) does—other historians are more complete, though still somewhat lacking, in their treatment of their prejudices—as are Hawisher et al. Hawisher et al. suggest they reviewed various sources pertinent to computers and composition as a defined field, but they don’t fully
describe the sources, how they settled on the sources, or what their analytic methods were. They do not describe how their status in the field, for example, shapes their text, either. Many rhetoric and composition historians do not write specifically about how they came to choose their corpus. However, as noted in Chapter 2, making this step in the research process explicit helps readers understand how the corpus data fulfills the needs of the project, a point scholars such as Smagorinsky (2008) have previously addressed.

Noting explicit ideologies and prejudices when possible in the scholar’s historical account goes far toward making the research RAD scholarship (Haswell, 2005). As Daly Goggin (2009) describes, rhetoric and composition scholars have been interested in various “kinds of empirical, theoretical, and historical research agendas” (p. 382), all of which have ideological underpinnings. With transparent prejudices, approaches to research can be identified as balanced or biased, as replicable or as methodologically problematic. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue:

As qualitative researchers we work to some extent by insight and intuition. We have moments of illumination. Things ‘come together.’ The problem is that we could be wrong. A near-library of research evidence shows that people (researchers included) habitually tend to overweight facts they believe in or depend on, to ignore or forget data not going in the direction of their reasoning and to ‘see’ confirming instances far more easily than disconfirming instances (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). (p. 252)
Here, Miles and Huberman are specifically describing why *counting* (quantitative analysis) can help ground researchers by speaking to the numerical truth behind researchers’ insights as a type of triangulation of data. They also suggest scholars review their data in ways that help scholars move from “discrete facts” to “more abstract patterns […]”, moving up progressively from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape” (p. 261), which is often what RAD research aims to do. Rigorous methods such as quantitative, empirical, or RAD methods may help scholars prejudices come to light. Still, although a scholar’s prejudices may shape the way she understands and portrays the history, understanding the import of such prejudices on historical inquiries still affords for a meaningful history, especially when the prejudices offered are not majority biases.

Throughout my project, I aim to explicitly describe my prejudices and methods to the best of my abilities. In the following section, I begin to make my research process explicit by describing overarching research questions. The above discussion of historical inquiry within the field helps situate the research questions and the analytic process involved in answering those questions within historical inquiry in the field.

**Research Questions**

I frame my questions around the following two overarching research questions:

*Question 1:* What is the history of “new media” within the discipline of rhetoric and composition?

*Question 2:* How do scholars define “new media” in rhetoric and composition’s printed scholarship?
These overarching questions guide the entire project. In this chapter’s following sections, I outline my methodology for answering these two overarching questions, explaining one method and one analysis at a time. There are two separate analyses within this project, and I describe them one by one. Chapters 4 and 5 of this project each center on the results and implications of one research question and its subsequent, more specific questions (if applicable).

**Question 1** is focused by the following specific research questions:

- Chapter 4: In what scholarly conversations did “new media” enter rhetoric and composition scholarship?
  - How have scholars framed issues of “new media”?
  - How has that framing of issues contributed to disciplinary development and formation?

**Question 2** is focused by the following specific research questions:

- Chapter 5: How do scholars in the discipline define “new media” in four scholarly journals?
  - What are the strategic maneuvers scholars make when they invoke definitions of “new media”?
  - How do these maneuvers influence disciplinary development?

The individual answers to these specific research questions fit together, helping me answer my overarching research question. The conclusion chapter (Chapter 6) synthesizes my specific research questions to draw a descriptive conclusion about the history of “new media” within rhetoric and composition studies.
Methods of the current project

My data collection process was two-tiered. In the first tier, I identified a data set of 70 journal articles concerned with and defining “new media.” In the second tier, I used the 70-article data set to answer two distinct research questions—Question 1 and Question 2. These research questions required different analytic frameworks and processes. In the following sections, I begin by describing the process of arriving at my final 70-article data set. I then describe the analytic methods employed in Chapter 4 to answer Question 1, followed by a discussion of the analytic methods employed in Chapter 5 to answer Question 2.

Compiling the data set

Why use journals?

For my historical inquiry, I used journal articles as primary sources. Journal articles represent the growth of the discipline in ways collected editions, oral histories, and conference proceedings do not. Professional books (including collected editions), oral histories, and conference proceedings demonstrate shifts and trends of research in the discipline; however, journal articles are a consistent body of knowledge because of editorial policies. Journal articles are also linked with disciplinary development across disciplines, institutions, and cultures (Kuhn, 1970). It is no surprise that rhetoric and composition has developed as a discipline through its scholarly publications (Daly Goggin, 2009). Because my study examines “new media” within rhetoric and
composition, I look to journal articles to find evidence of how theories and definitions of “new media” have developed within the discipline.

Both humanist and social science scholars can understand the importance of scholarly journals as primary sources. For example, both Connors (1991) and Daly Goggin (2009) both explain the role journal articles have played in understanding the growth of rhetoric and composition. Daly Goggin’s (2009) claims, journals serve as an important locus of disciplinary power, shaping the discipline even as they are shaped by it. [...] Moreover, of all the disciplinary discursive spaces [...], journals have played one of the most important roles in fostering the field of rhetoric and composition. (p. 225)

What Daly Goggin suggests is that the discipline’s journals are its gatekeepers (p. 222) vis-à-vis what they publish. As disciplinary gatekeepers, journals are an effective means of examining disciplinarity and the evolution of the discipline’s conceptual work.

According to Kuhn (1970), disciplines are not composed of knowledge compounded over time. Instead, disciplines change or shift when the disciplinary community begins to adhere to new knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge of a discipline is not just additive or summative; there are also possibilities for the rejection of previously held beliefs and epistemic reorientation. A discipline’s artifacts are the records of these shifts; as such, peer reviewed journals and textbooks are the repositories of knowledge that push a discipline in different directions (Kuhn, 1970); articles vetted for publication in such repositories demarcate the collective knowledge of the discipline.

However, as Daly Goggin (2009) notes, scholars in the discipline shape what is published
in the journals. The scenario is that of give and take: scholars see certain studies published, become interested in those areas and, in turn, publish scholarship in those areas. I rely on scholarly articles to locate my data and comprise my corpus because they are the best markers of a discipline’s evolution, containing articles that reflect the trends in the discipline at the time of publication. Articles, then, act as a record of new media’s incorporation into the discipline. MacDonald (2007) claims, “one way to probe assumptions and values in a profession is to examine the discourse of its professional conferences and publication” (p. 588), and I use journals to probe the field’s assumptions with regards to “new media.”

This study is not a comprehensive project. It is instead a selective historical inquiry attempting to understand the development of a concept. Therefore, paying careful attention to journal articles (normal avenues of disciplinary development) as my primary artifacts makes more sense than a comprehensive approach examining multiple artifacts and repositories of knowledge in brief. Because peer-reviewed journals are integral to the development of disciplines, I reviewed articles for discussions of “new media” in four peer reviewed journals in rhetoric and composition: College Composition and Communication (CCC), Research in the Teaching of English (RTE), Computers and Composition (C & C), and Kairos.

These four journals are integral to my study because CCC and RTE have been foundational to the discipline and C & C and Kairos have been foundational to the subfield of computers and writing (a subfield where discussions of new media are especially focused). Although College English was the first journal (published in 1938) to
offer a venue for composition and rhetoric studies, by the mid 1960s, *College English*’s editor, Gwynn, “pushed the journal further toward literary scholarship” and had started “diverting manuscripts concerned with composition to *CCC*” (Daly Goggin, 2009, p. 1492), which was first published in March, 1950 (Daly Goggin, 2009). *CCC* became a more accurate forum for discussions about college composition and communication courses, and the field of composition and rhetoric used the journal as a space to grow the discipline. *CCC*, along with *RTE*, *C & C*, and *Kairos*, are journals through which I review both categories of work rhetoric and composition scholars engage in (teaching and researching) while examining top journals in the discipline. *CCC*, for example, is included in NCTE members’ membership fees, making it a highly influential journal because so many members of the profession receive and read it. *RTE* focuses specifically on issues of research and pedagogy while *C & C* examines a particular subdiscipline closely connected to issues of new media. *Kairos*, one of the discipline’s most well-known digital journals is in many ways not only influential in terms of disseminating theories of writing technologies, but it frequently utilizes new media to disseminate that knowledge. These four journals form the basis of my data set.

*Arriving at the data set*

After identifying four journals in the field where discussion of “new media” might arise, I began to narrow my data set. Because I could not use every article from each journal over the past ten years (many articles would not be relevant to a history of new media), I developed a system to narrow down the data set. I went through several rounds of investigating every journal article, categorizing articles as I read and re-read them. In
this section, I describe in more depth how this process of corpus-narrowing was completed.

I opened each journal’s online database/archive and did a search through every issue for the key term, “new media.” I searched every title and abstract for the specific term “new media.” As I reviewed abstracts and articles, certain key words made me want to look closer at particular articles. These key words included: “new media,” multimodality/multiple modes, modes, digital, digital rhetoric, visual rhetoric, online, internet, and any mention of software. These key terms are all central issues connected to new media. For example, Manovich (2001) defines new media as a blending of digital modes. Therefore, I used my knowledge of multimodal theory in rhetoric and composition (which is often tied to discussions of visual rhetoric) to identify some key terms (multimodal/mode; visual rhetoric), and other key terms were tied to digital writing (digital, digital rhetoric, online, internet, software) because, according to Manovich (2001) and Selfe (2004), new media is always digital. For articles appearing to have some pertinent information, I opened the article and skimmed the text, looking for the key terms, the argument, and the scholars cited in the piece.

While reviewing the articles in the four journals over a ten-year time span (to identify a recent history of new media in rhetoric and composition), I used the key terms listed above to begin narrowing my data corpus by paying attention to articles connected to these key terms. From these key terms, I located 179 potential articles for analysis. Reviewing the articles for these key terms, I then began to see categories (described in following paragraphs) emerging. Categories were more substantial than the key terms,
and they identified similarities among journal articles. The categories did not have to be directly referred to by authors within the article in order for the article to be listed under that category. Often, articles exemplify the category through key words and the article’s content and arguments. For example, the term “remediation” did not have to be used or explicitly discussed in an article for that article to construct arguments about the shift from page to screen and the affordances or constraints of such a shift.

While searching for articles within each journal, I kept a list of the 11 categories I developed (see table 2) and identified articles fitting within those categories.
The category for annotated bibliographies was comprised of articles published solely in *RTE*, and these bibliographies contained citations for technology and writing education. The category for visual literacy/rhetoric, was a type of precursor category. Articles in this category linked visual communication to concepts of multimodality. Other categories revolved around digital concerns, centering on digital composing/writing concerns, digital technologies (exploring new/old technology’s impact on writing and
new possibilities for digital writing), and media, digital modes, and remediation (approaching writing and composing as a rhetorical use of various modes and identifying the development and progression of modes over time). Other categories dealt with disciplinarity, examining writing technologies through an historical lens or printed position statements regarding multimodality and writing technologies (from NCTE or CCC). Other articles are review essays about or responding to discussions of writing technologies (pieces related to digital composition and new media). Some articles utilized discussions of new media scholarship to craft their literature reviews and explain the argument’s importance to the scholarly community by heavily drawing on or citing new media scholars and scholarship. Lastly, but perhaps most important, some articles presented arguments particularly about new media; journals and authors self-described the article with the key term “new media.”

I kept these categories in a separate word processing document as a simple spreadsheet. My simple spreadsheet contained a list of the category. Under each category, I listed the article citations for those articles meeting the category’s definition. Although two categories (article is an annotated bibliography and article is a published position statement) are particularly associated with two journals (RTE and CCC, respectively), overall, the categories emerged across the spectrum of articles. These categories, then, speak to the current themes and interests of the discipline in regards to contemporary iterations of writing. The categories demonstrate disciplinary interests: both by describing what scholars find interesting to research and by offering examples of the types of research editors find interesting and important to publish. These categories demonstrate
current trends of research in the discipline while they describe how the discipline understands modern writing.

Articles were assigned to one category which best described the content of the article. I reorganized my bibliography chronologically by year of publication, and the categories became useful tags I appended to each citation. Because these tags were developed inductively, they represent trends in the field, not simply my own ideas, and the networked interests of rhetoric and composition research. My initial taxonomy demonstrates a “[recognition of] patterns and relationships that emerge” in historical, qualitative, and empirical inquiry (Moss, 1992).

After crafting a bibliography of citations according to the above categories from the four journals over the past ten years, I reviewed my list. At 179 articles, my data corpus still needed some refining because the list was too lengthy and unwieldy to complete an attentive study. Because of my interest in definitions and scholarly conversations incorporating concepts of new media, the categories including specific new media arguments, the contextualization of new media, and the articles with a focus on media, digital modes, and remediation emerged as most pertinent to the research questions. These categories include articles that are specifically about new media and terms closely connected with new media, so they are the most pertinent categories to examine. These categories helped me focus my project on new media within the discipline while helping me address the research questions. I went back through the 179 articles, this time looking particularly for articles fitting into the above-mentioned three categories. After this re-categorization, I was left with 70 articles. Although I used
different methods to analyze the content and get at the different questions guiding this project (Question 1 and Question 2), these 70 articles are the data set I draw from for both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Tags (abbreviated versions of category titles) were used to denote which of the three codes was assigned to each article: each tag drew on key words within the category. For example, the category “article is about media, digital modes, and remediation” was tagged as MDR. Each tag was bolded to differentiate it the code tag from the citation.

Figure 1: Keeping the data organized

After organizing the bibliography chronologically and assigning each citation a tag, each article was also assigned a particular number as a means to carefully generate a system of organizing source material, as suggested by numerous historians (Shafter, 1969; White, 1978; Connors, 1992; Brundage, 2002; McDowell, 2002; Gilderhus, 2003). The numbers afforded easy source differentiation as the inquiry progressed from key terms to
collecting and analyzing definitions. Figure 1 represents this system of organization (which was useful for answering Question 1 and Question 2), showing a screen capture of the documents and system of organization utilized.

In the next section, I describe how I used the data collected through this process to answer my questions to Question 1. After explaining every step of this process, I move on to a new section discussing my data analysis for Question 2. Although I took some similar steps to answer both Questions 1 and 2, each question was answered using different methods. Therefore, I first discuss the methods I used to answer Question 1, and I later discuss the methods I used to answer Question 2.

**Analytic methods used to answer Question 1**

*Conversations*²¹

As Smagorinsky (2008), Johanek (2000), MacNealy (1999), and Takayoshi, Tomlinson, and Castillo (forthcoming) suggest, the research questions guide the methodology a researcher employs, not the other way around. To answer my overarching research questions fully, I needed to first answer more specific research questions. As noted earlier in this chapter, the first questions I needed to answer were the following:

*Question 1*: In what scholarly conversations did “new media” enter rhetoric and composition scholarship?

  - How have scholars framed issues of “new media”?
  - How has that framing of issues contributed to disciplinary development

²¹ This section describes the methods used to arrive at the analysis, results, and discussion arrived at in Chapter 4.
Identifying core concepts underlying the data set helped me uncover the discussion and trends incorporating “new media” into the discipline.

This categorizing scheme follows Grant-Davie’s (1992) discussion of coding as “the process of identifying units of analysis and classifying each unit according to the categories in a coding system—either a preexisting system or one developed for the data in question” (p. 274). I also drew on content analysis in this project. According to Huckin (2002),

content analysis allows the discourse analyst to examine each of the texts in a corpus and discern thematic patterns that extend across texts. […] In contrast to traditional (quantitative) content analysis, which performs statistical modeling using key words, qualitative content analysis uses a less mechanical, more interpretive procedure without statistical modeling. The result is a compilation of subtopics found in the corpus as a whole, representing thematic threads that run across the corpus. (p. 356)

In a later piece, Huckin (2004), adds:

Content analysis is the identifying, quantifying, and analyzing of specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text of body of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlying thematic or rhetorical pattern running through these texts. (p. 14)

Both the quantitative aspect of content analysis that helps the researcher identify and
quantify specific words or phrases and the qualitative approach of identifying trends in the content inform my research project. Huckin describes one way of identifying salient patterns when he describes content analysis. In his study on “Textual Silence and the Discourse of Homelessness,” for example, Huckin (2002) describes “a taxonomy of textual silences” (p. 348) that emerges from his content analysis. Such an analysis is used to keep track of trends and patterns, with a taxonomy or categorization of themes emerging as results. The themes Huckin identifies via content analysis in his study are causes, effects, public responses, and demographics. In my study, I use content analysis to identify types of conversations scholars engage in via arguments presented in their articles.

Finally, I drew inspiration from grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), finding key terms in articles, coding articles based on those key terms, developing categories explaining the meaning behind the codes, and, finally, drawing an explanatory theory from the analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain that grounded theory attempts to uncover deep levels of understanding during analysis:

Analysis can range from superficial description to theoretical interpretations.
Superficial description tends to skim the top of data […]. A more in-depth analysis tends to dig deeper beneath the surface of data […]. It presents description that embodies well-constructed themes/categories, development of context, and explanations of process or change over time. In-depth analysis is more likely to generate new knowledge and deeper understanding because it tends to go beyond what everyone already knows. (pp. 50-51)
According to their description, grounded theory seeks to understand the very heart of the data. However, grounded theory is also typically an approach of qualitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My study is not a qualitative study. Therefore, when I say I drew inspiration from grounded theory, I do not mean to imply that I used a grounded theory analysis. Instead, I aimed to uncover deeper meaning in my analysis: my content analysis of the journal articles was not a superficial analysis. Rather, through a series of coding, I aimed to describe new media’s incorporation into rhetoric and composition in a deeper manner. I do not simply describe a taxonomy of scholarly conversations; rather, I also offer a theory that underpins the types of scholarly conversations rhetoric and compositionists engage in through the four journals of my corpus (as described later in this section).

First level of analysis

After collecting my data set, I put aside the system I used to collect the data. I began to look at the articles with fresh eyes. Returning to the articles, I reread them numerous times with the intent of developing key words for each specific article. Rather than looking for key words that would indicate an article was about new media (which I did to compile the data set), I kept a list of key words describing the central arguments of each article. For example, some articles were identified with the key words “pedagogy,” “consumerism,” “vocabulary,” “theory,” and “ethics” (as will be described further later in this section). These key words were also identified inductively (Grant-Davie, 1992). This set of key words was the primary means by which I described my data set: they describe the themes emerging in each article. After putting together an initial list of key words, I
reduced the list to a more precise list of key words by reviewing the articles several more times to determine what key words were central to the scholars’ arguments in each article. The key words I attributed to articles were not the same as the key words I used to identify possible articles (as noted above), nor were they key terms listed by the author/journal (if any were listed). Instead, these key words came from carefully reading and re-reading each article to determine what key words described the content and argument presented in the article, what key words summarized the themes of the article. Each reading allowed me to pick up on more precise key words until I had a set of four to seven key words for each article, honing in on the main purpose and content of the text. This process is demonstrated in figure 2 above.

In critically examining the articles several more times after identifying key words, I used content analysis to describe patterns emerging from articles with like key words. Key words describe an initial identification of themes in each article. From this set of themes, I developed a system of inductive categories to describe the thematic content of the articles. By continuously reviewing the articles and their key words, I used content analysis to categorize the articles into both minor and major categories, which I arrived at inductively. The minor categories describe a more superficial understanding of thematic patterns in the corpus. The major categories are patterns of deeper thematic meaning. For example, Huckin (2002) describes four major categories in his study on silence. These major categories explain a deeper meaning than the more superficial categories have. His major category—“causes”—can be broken down into 16 minor categories (which are,

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22 Typically, journals assigning key terms to articles use seven to nine key terms identified by the author.
according to Huckin, types of responses). I used a similar system to identify both surface-level trends and the overarching trends those surface-level trends indicated. The surface-level trends were my minor categories, and the overarching trends were my major categories. By grouping together the key terms under shared categories, I identified seven minor categories: digital texts, the classroom, institutional contexts, writing technologies, foundational knowledge of digital writing technologies and new media, issues about and defining modern and traditional concepts of composition, and community and literacy. These categories capture the larger themes the key words contribute to in the article’s focus and indicate the larger concerns of the discipline.

To arrive at these minor categories, I examined all of the key words and saw trends emerging in what the key words offer scholars: what themes these key words point to in published articles. Key words helped me identify articles focusing on similar issues and research topics in the discipline. From articles with similar issues emerged categories that better defined what scholarly conversations the authors were drawing on and contributing to. The minor categories, therefore, reveal clusters of scholarly conversations; minor categories represent the types of discussions scholars have across volumes in published research. Such discussions can be identified as scholarly conversations that scholars contribute to through their published research. For example, if an article is tagged with the key term “codified sign,” what is the author trying to get readers to think about? Because codified signs have to do with social semiotics, this key term points readers to understanding how they might define writing.

After coding for minor categories, I paused in my analysis process to ensure the
reliability of my coding scheme. Although some scholars such as Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) suggest reliability resides in the researcher’s own process of data collection and interpretation, discussions of reliability can be explicit or vague. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that researchers “analyses can be evocative, illuminating, masterful—and wrong. The story we told, as it is, does not fit the data. Reasonable colleagues double-checking the case come up with quite different findings” (p. 262), and they further suggest, “If I can reproduce the finding in a new context of in another part of my database, it is a dependable one. If someone else can reproduce it, better still” (p. 273). The replicability Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest is a staple of RAD research and demonstrates the dependability of claims made. Even though Morse et al. suggest some principles of qualitative research in particular make the analysis process reliable, it is important to show the replicability of research (Haswell, 2005), partially as a testament to the dependability of the findings. Morse et al. (2002) also suggest, though, “We need to […] place responsibility within the investigator rather than external judges of the completed product” (p. 15), which is a point Haswell (2005) alludes to. According to Haswell, reliability has much to do with replicablity and aggregablity. To ensure that my research is both replicable and aggregable, I cannot rely simply on other scholars’ or colleagues’ interpretation of my data and coding scheme. Therefore, inter-rater reliability was more formative than summative in my research (as Morse et. al, 2002, often suggest inter-rater reliability can sometimes be).

Hayes and Hatch (1999) suggest two “common ways to measure the reliability of observers’ judgments are percentage of agreement and correlation” (p. 354). To ensure
reliability, which leads my study to be replicable and aggregable, I used both percentage of agreement and correlation (correlation being identified as Cohen’s Kappa). Hayes and Hatch (1999) describe Cohen’s Kappa as “[taking] chance as its baseline […]. It then takes the extent to which observed agreement exceeds chance (C) agreement \((O − C)\) and compares it to the extent to which possible agreement exceeds chance agreement \((P − C)\). Thus, \(κ = (O − C) / (P − C)\). […] In other words, Cohen’s kappa asks ‘How much better than chance did we do compared to how well we possibly could have done?’” (p. 358).

I enlisted the assistance of an inter-rater to ensure a reliable coding scheme. After giving her the descriptions of minor categories I identified as well as examples of each, I sent her a 10% sample (seven articles) of my data set. She reviewed these articles, identified key terms for each article, and then coded the articles into the minor categories I previously described. We compared our coding. Our reliability was 86% with a kappa of 0.8 or “very good.”

In making sense of the minor categories as trends developed in scholarly conversations, I saw the minor categories all coalescing around three major categories: composing in society, composing in the university, and composing in the discipline. I identified the larger scholarly conversations disciplinary discussions of “new media” were a part of, and I argue these scholarly conversations are major categories. For example, key words fitting into categories about the classroom, scholarship, and institutional contexts were all a minor pieces of larger conversations about what it means to compose within a university setting. Other categories demonstrated larger

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23 To help me calculate the Cohen’s kappa, I used http://graphpad.com/quickcalcs/kappa1.cfm. This website allows users to plug in their data, then finishes the calculations and suggests levels of agreement.
conversations that are particular to contemporary society. These types of articles addressed writing in the here and now. Finally, scholars who engaged in scholarly conversations about design choices, rhetorical principles, heuristics, and multimodality all had a common feature: they were engaging in a conversation about the relationship between the definition of writing in the past and the definition of writing in the field of rhetoric and composition today. They embraced definitions of writing ranging from print-linguistic to aural and visual.

Ultimately, these major categories led me to a particular core category: composing frameworks. All three major categories describing the conversations new media falls into fit the overarching category of discussing composing frameworks. For example, some authors describe what it means to be writers and teachers of writing immersed in a world of electronic compositions (Shauf, 2001). Others are interested in how visual rhetoric is related to rhetoric and composition (Hocks, 2003) while other scholars are interested in what it means to write new media (Cushman, 2004a). Other scholars emphasize sound as an unexplored mode of communication (McKee, 2006; Selfe, 2009). All of these scholars are participating in a scholarly discussion of how rhetoric and composition research articulates a contemporary framework for composition, including what writing means across multiple, contemporary contexts (video games, portfolios, and political remix videos, for example). From this category, I put forth the explanatory theory: rhetoric and composition as a field is reinventing definitions of itself that fit a contemporary society where writing technologies and traditional constructions of literacy are both prevalent. Such a theory explains, in part, why rhetoric and
composition is concerned with concepts of new media: there are tensions between traditional notions of the discipline’s work (understanding and teaching writing and rhetorical principles) and how that work relates to more contemporary notions of writing (multimodality), especially in regards to a society that uses new modes of writing (digital writing) while lamenting the state of literate abilities (as seen through a lens of autonomous literacy) (Street, 1984) during so-called literacy crises. In Chapter 4, I return to this theory and describe it in more detail. Table 3 (below) visually represents the movement from key words to my explanatory theory.
## Analytic methods used to answer Question 2

Some of the steps I describe below may seem similar to those steps I took in analyzing the journal articles (above); however, in this section I describe a different analysis, one aimed at understanding particular types of definitions of “new media” within the articles (as described below). The second question I ask breaks away from the

### Table 3: Frameworks for understanding new media in rhetoric and composition studies’ scholarship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major categories</th>
<th>Minor Categories</th>
<th>Characteristics of articles in the category</th>
<th>Key words representative of thematic content in articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composing in contemporary society</td>
<td>Digital texts</td>
<td>focuses on contemporary new media compositions and products created using digital tools</td>
<td>digital (and its variants: digital divide, digital media, digitize); media (and its variants: new media, multimedia, digital media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composing Technologies</td>
<td>focuses on contemporary new media tools used to create compositions</td>
<td>computers; cyborgs; hardware; hypertext; material; physical; remediation; software; technology (-ies &amp; -ical); video games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundational knowledge</td>
<td>focuses on the theoretical or conceptual foundations for understanding new media compositions and processes</td>
<td>affordances; constraints; definitions; framework; literacy (and its variants: print literacy, digital literacy, visual literacy, heritage literacy); models; terminology; vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community and literacy</td>
<td>focuses on the communities of practice in which new media composing is engaged, developed, and produced</td>
<td>community; culture (and it’s variants: cultural, convergence culture, cultural competencies, popular culture, Amish culture, youth culture); identity; minority traditions; popular media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing in the university</td>
<td>Classroom context</td>
<td>focuses on tools for working with students in regards to new media</td>
<td>assessment; course design; pedagogy; response; stakes; student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional context</td>
<td>focuses on notions of writing in relation to other academic institutions</td>
<td>faculty; graduate education; humanist; infrastructure; institutions; intellectual property; profession; programs; scholarship; tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing in the discipline</td>
<td>Issues about/defining modern and traditional concepts of composing</td>
<td>focuses on disciplinary definitions of writing and new media</td>
<td>argument; audience; codified sign; collaboration; design; heuristics; modes; process; representation; rhetoric(s); rhetorical principles; social; text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Explanatory theory:
Rhetoric and composition as a field is reinventing definitions of itself that fit a contemporary society where writing technologies and traditional constructions of literacy are both prevalent; the discipline is moving from universal discussions and descriptions of writing to field-specific discussions, and within this range of conversations are distinct issues and concerns.
previous analysis (described above). The first analysis was aimed at understanding what scholarly discussions took up “new media” and incorporated it into the discipline. Such an analysis does not give a complete understanding of new media’s history in rhetoric and composition. As noted earlier in this chapter, I also needed to understand the discipline’s definitions of “new media” (*Question 2*).

In order to understand how scholars talk about and define “new media” in the discipline, I had to look at more than just the key terms: I had to analyze actual definitions. I reviewed my second research question:

- How do scholars in the discipline define “new media” in four scholarly journals?

Such a question could only be answered by finding all instances of “new media” in the data set and identifying which instances offered definitions. After collecting definitions of “new media,” each definition was carefully copied word-for-word and pasted into the new document, along with the number of the article it came out of to ensure proper documentation (Shafter, 1969; White, 1978; Connors, 1992; Brundage, 2002; McDowell, 2002; Gilderhus, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Breakdown of definition distribution in the data set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of articles total in the data set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of articles with definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of articles with definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of definitions per article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to collect and code definitions of “new media,” I first had to describe what I considered a definition of “new media.” A definition of “new media” consists of a statement in which an author describes new media with either explicit use of the term “new media” or reference to it through some other means (referent pronouns or use of other related terms such as digital composition, media, remediation) coupled with a definitional verb (especially “defines”), to be verb (is, are), or an active, argumentative verb (explain, suggest, attribute). Definitions, then, are statements about new media, suggesting what its characteristics are, who it affects, the position it maintains in the discipline, or even what earlier scholars have said about new media. Using the above criteria for definitions, I identified 68 definitions in the data set. The 68 definitions came from 28 out of the 70 articles in the data set, as illustrated in table 4.

Analyzing the definitions via content analysis (as defined earlier in this chapter) (Huckin, 2004), I identified how scholars discuss “new media”: what the content of their definitions demonstrate about how new media is used in rhetoric and composition and who uses it for what purposes. I used content analysis to categorize the types of definitions emerging in the data. I again used superficial and overarching categories to explain my findings.
I coded each definition for content, asking what the definition implies about “new media” in terms of activity or users. The definitions were coded for content and for user: what did the definition imply about “new media” as an object or subject; what did the definition imply about who was using “new media” and why? I arrived at codes inductively by examining each definition with the above questions in mind. I noted trends
emerging in the definitions, and then translated these trends into codes. The codes emerging in the definitions were: new media is digital composition; new media is multimodal; new media is interactive; new media breaks from print traditions; new media is crucial for the development of the discipline; and new media is a concept originating in other fields of study (see table 5 above). These conceptual codes demonstrate the superficial level of content analysis in this particular analysis.

After establishing content-analysis codes, I wanted to ensure that my research was RAD research (Haswell, 2005). Therefore, I went through a system of establishing inter-rater reliability. After my first round of coding, I actually had twelve separate codes. After informally discussing this coding with colleagues, I reviewed the data again, this time narrowing my codes to seven. Then, I solicited the help of an outside rater, giving her 20% of my data (15 definitions, selected using a computer-generated randomizing program—http://www.random.org). This colleague and I had 67% simple agreement, with a kappa of 0.6. According to theories of Cohen’s kappa, the strength of this agreement is “moderate.” After speaking with my colleague about where our coding agreed and diverged, I went back to my data and refined both my coding scheme and definitions of the conceptual codes, reducing the codes from seven down to six. I asked a second outside rater to review the data, giving her the same 20% sample as I gave the first rater as well as the refined coding scheme. This second rater and I had a simple agreement of 87%, with a kappa of 0.8. The strength of this agreement is considered to be “very good.” Satisfied with this degree of reliability and the precision it brought to my coding scheme, I was able to move forward with my analysis.
After refining my coding scheme, the codes were grouped to make sense of the patterns emerging in the data. I surveyed the definitions and the codes applied to those definitions, rereading for a feel of what rhetorical work the definitions accomplished for the discipline as theoretical constructs. Through careful consideration of the codes, the definitions, and the relationships between them, a distinction between practice-driven and concept-driven theories emerged. Understanding how scholars employ definitions of new media illuminates why scholars continue to define “new media” in rhetoric and composition. These definitions relate to ongoing definitional problems in the discipline (see Chapter 6 for a more specific discussion of these problems). Concept-driven theories of “new media” pertain directly to the status of the discipline and the theoretical underpinnings of new media compositions. On the other hand, definitions described as practice-driven theories cover more practical discussions of how new media is created and used. The discipline relies heavily on such practice-driven theories, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Results from the methods

In upcoming chapters, I explain in more depth “new media’s” position in rhetoric and composition. My research questions focus the next three chapters on scholarly conversations of “new media” and the types of definitions scholars use to discuss and describe “new media.” I discuss the results and implications of the analyses described above especially in regards to how rhetoric and composition incorporated new media into the discipline and how scholars have since defined new media within the disciplinary context.
In Chapter 4, I explain the results of the analysis for *Question 1*. I discuss the three main trends in scholarly discussions incorporating “new media” into the discipline. Scholars compose arguments within certain scholarly conversations—conversations that are developed through published journal articles and focus on particular themes and content. Certain scholarly conversations (composing in the 21st century, defining composition, and composing in the university) enable scholars to incorporate discussions of new media into the field’s scholarship (as described in Chapter 1).

In Chapter 5, I explain the results of the analysis for *Question 2*. I examine definitions of “new media” in published articles within the data set. The definitions suggest different arguments about “new media”: what new media does or is, why it is important, and who new media is important to. I identify six types of definitions scholars use to present arguments about “new media.” Furthermore, I identify these arguments as theories scholars put forth: scholars articulate both concept-driven and practice-driven theories about “new media’s” position in rhetoric and composition scholarship.

In Chapter 6, I conclude the project with a discussion of where the analyses for *Question 1* and *Question 2* intersect and overlap. In short, I describe what these analyses suggest about “new media’s” history in rhetoric and composition, beginning with how scholars talk about “new media,” what trends in “new media” discussions look like throughout the past decade, and what these trends suggest about the further development of rhetoric and composition. I describe how scholarly conversations are apparent not only in the content of articles but also in the definitions scholars use to construct arguments.
about “new media’s” import on the field. I conclude the project with a discussion of “new media’s” impact on the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition.
Chapter 4

Rhetoric and Composition’s Scholarly Conversations: Where Does “New Media” Fit?

Examining the history of composition-rhetoric allows us to see our discipline, which seems sometimes to be spinning centrifugally to pieces, as what it truly is: the current avatar of a tradition of studying and using discourse that is as old as literacy and probably older. Connors, 1997, p. 17

Throughout this chapter, I describe the ways “new media” has been incorporated into the field’s published research and scholarly conversations. Examining the published scholarship on “new media” in four of the discipline’s journals allows me to analyze categories of scholarly conversations incorporating “new media.” In this chapter, I argue scholars engage in three overarching types of scholarly conversations incorporating “new media”: conversations about composing in contemporary society, composing in the university, and composing in the discipline (see table 3 in the analysis section of this chapter). Each categorization points to one way rhetoric and composition scholars seek to make rhetoric and composition’s current avatar relevant to the society, the university, and their own community of scholars. I will show the three types of scholarly conversations where “new media” is present are scholarly conversations that seek to define the discipline and explain the discipline’s “current avatar” (Connors, 1997, p. 17).

Throughout this chapter, I walk readers through my analysis of minor and major categories of scholarly conversations and explain the significance of seeing these themes

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24 See Chapters 2 and 3 for a discussion of why I chose journal articles in CCC, RTE, C & C, and Kairos.
and conversations emerge across the corpus. I argue rhetoric and compositionists engage in these scholarly conversations in an attempt to define the current composing frameworks scholars in the field draw on to accomplish their work and make the field relevant to themselves and to outsiders.

**Research Questions**

As described in Chapter 3, I use a series of focused research questions to trace the development of rhetoric and composition in regards to the particular case of “new media.” I ask:

- **Question 1:** In what scholarly conversations did “new media” enter rhetoric and composition scholarship?
  - How have scholars framed issues of “new media”?
  - How has that framing of issues contributed to disciplinary development and formation?

To answer these questions, I trace rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development through published scholarship on “new media.”

**Methodology**

As described more fully in Chapter 3, I collected a corpus of relevant articles from *CCC, RTE, C & C*, and *Kairos*. Articles I identified as about “new media,” as contextualized using “new media” scholarship, and as about media, digital modes, and remediation were selected for the corpus. To identify what scholarly conversations each

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25 This section is a condensed version of the discussion in Chapter 3 on methods used to answer Question 1.
article contributed to (and which conversations emerged in the discipline at large), I used content analysis to critically read and examine each article numerous times. Immersing myself in the data led to a preliminary set of “key words” for each article, which was then refined to four to seven key words per article. The key words I identified summarize themes in each article.

From these themes, I recognized minor categories emerging. Originally, I identified ten minor categories. After immersing myself further in the data, I narrowed these categories to seven, and coded the articles. Then, I enlisted the assistance of an inter-rater to ensure a reliable coding scheme. I used Cohen’s kappa (as described in Chapter 3) to identify reliability. Using the Cohen’s kappa formula, our reliability was 86% with a kappa of 0.8 or “very good.”

From here, I reviewed the trends emerging in minor categories. The minor categories show certain thematic patterns emerging in the content of the articles. These minor categories are indicative of larger thematic trends. Thinking through these thematic trends, I recognized major scholarly conversations. I returned to the data set and coded for major scholarly conversations, and three such conversations emerged. After again returning to the data set, an explanatory theory emerged. This theory explains the overarching purpose of scholarly conversations indicated by themes identified using key words, minor, and major categories.
Results

As noted in Chapter 3, I compiled a list of key words for each article. The key words are words and phrases used to describe the content and argument of an article from a reader’s perspective. These key words, then, describe thematic patterns in the articles, and I use the term “key words” in place of “theme” or “thematic content.” Reviewing the key words coupled with numerous critical re-readings of the articles led me to recognize minor categories of scholarly conversations. The key words demonstrate and embody the concepts underpinning each minor category (see table 3 below).
Through careful recoding and an inductive content analysis (as described more fully in Chapter 3), I identified seven minor categories describing the content of the data set through an initial understanding of what the articles contribute to disciplinary conversations. Next, I identified major categories describing the relationships demonstrated by “key words” and minor categories through a deeper analysis suggesting types of overarching conversations present in the field. I identified three major categories of scholarly conversations: *composing in contemporary society*, *composing in the university* and *composing in the discipline*.

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26 As noted in Chapter 3, Corbin & Strauss (2008) describe minor categories as those that “skim the surface” and major categories as those that offer “a more in-depth analysis” (pp. 50-51).
the university, and composing in the discipline. These major categories describe which scholarly conversations “new media” has influenced and which conversations impact the field’s scholarship about “new media” as well as the field’s growth and development. Such scholarly conversations reflect scholars’ constant efforts to define the discipline. The three major categories suggest scholars’ anxiety about their disciplinary identity as they attempt to make their work, new media, and writing and composing more generally relevant to the world (especially students), to the university (departments and administration), and to themselves (meeting Selfe’s (1999) and Yancey’s (2004b) calls for paying critical attention to new technologies and modes of writing).

Analysis

My inductive coding of articles resulted in minor and major categories of scholarly conversations. Table 6 (below) shows the frequencies and percentages of the minor and major categories throughout the data set. In the next section, I describe the minor categories and how articles within these categories exemplify overarching scholarly conversations (major categories) that include “new media.” The next section describes these minor and major categories in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Frequency of Articles in Major and Minor Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composing in contemporary society</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composing in the university</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composing in the discipline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues about/defining modern and traditional concepts of composing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I organize the following analysis by major categories. Each major category discussion begins with a brief definition of each major category followed by a brief definition of each minor category comprising the major category. Then, I offer examples of articles including themes that contribute to each category (the themes are represented by the “key words” I identified for the article). From here, I describe which minor category the article is representative of followed by a discussion of how the article is representative of the types of articles within the major category.

Throughout my analysis, I argue scholars are most interested in convincing outsiders of the field’s relevance. Through their published articles, scholars provide arguments for convincing outsiders of the field’s relevance; their arguments focus on explaining of discussing composing frameworks rather than typical or traditional academic texts. Scholars’ emphases on composing frameworks demonstrate the content of the field as something other than teaching and researching academic discourse. Because scholars spend the most time discussing “new media” in terms of contemporary society, the following analysis demonstrates the importance scholars place on “new media” as a means to connect with writing, writers, and audiences outside the discipline in non-academic settings.

**Composing in contemporary society**

*Composing in contemporary society* is a major category of scholarly conversations encompassing four minor conversational categories: “digital texts,” “foundational knowledge,” “composing technologies,” and “community and literacy.” Conversations about *composing in contemporary society* meet the needs of a broader,
more universal audience. They are conversations about what it means to write in the world at large. *Composing in contemporary society*, then, is defined as a scholarly conversation in which scholars present arguments about the field’s relevance to non-academic settings, often relying on contemporary types of written products and the composing technologies used to craft such products. Conversations in this category also account for 52% (36 articles) of the articles in the data set.

The four minor categories that comprise *composing in contemporary society* category are related because they each describe a portion of the overall landscape of *composing in contemporary society*. The minor categories reflect what kinds of writing occur outside of the university. “Digital texts” reminds readers of the textual products people are engaged in frequently creating in the 2000s. For example, Wysocki’s (2001) “Impossibly Distinct: On Form/Content and Word/Image in Two Pieces of Computer-Based Interactive Media,” is an article focusing on two particulate digital texts. She examines the construction of two CD-ROMS with content that seems similar on the surface (virtual tours of two art collections), but due to their digital constructions, the two texts focus on different aspects of the art collections and lead viewers/readers through the collections with different purposes. Wysocki’s piece is an example of the “digital texts” minor category because the article’s emphasis is on textual products used in the 2000s outside of the academic realm. At the start of the 2000s, CD-ROMs like the two Wysocki describes were quite popular: they were digital texts produced and consumed for multiple purposes including education and entertainment.
“Foundational knowledge” conversations include discussions of why digital writing and digital textual products are classified as writing: they explain the foundational knowledge that emphasizes how a YouTube video, for example, is composed in ways that make it a contemporary written text. Although I use the phrase “foundational knowledge” to describe these categories, I do not mean to suggest that these texts always rely on historical constructions of texts. For example, some articles in this minor category seek to develop foundational knowledge. Shauf’s (2001), “The Problem of Electronic Argument: A Humanist’s Perspective” sets out to define a grammar of electronic writing (as will be further described later in this chapter). Texts categorized as a part of the “foundational knowledge” minor category are not about the past. They are, rather, about detailing what counts as a text, whether this definition relies on past discussions or on newly constructed foundations (such as a new grammar of electronic writing).

“Composing technologies” conversations discuss how writers in the world at large are writing: they describe the tools writers use to create new digital texts (such as using hypertext to produce a different textual experience). Rather than suggesting what types of products are being composed, “composing technologies” emphasizes how texts are being produced. For example, Wysocki’s (2007) “It is Not Only Ours” describes a variety of composing technologies from audacity to the Wii to World of Warcraft (a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, or MMORPG) as a “list of emerged and emerging digital […] structures for designing, producing, distributing, sharing, and consuming texts” (p. 284). Her emphasis is on the ways texts in the 2000s are produced and distributed, not the products of using such technologies.
Finally, articles focused on discussions of “community and literacy” emphasize the particular literate habits of communities outside of the university. Articles in this category account for how a particular community engages in multimodal writing to form bonds between community members. Hull (2003), for example, suggests how one community in Oakland, California celebrates the digital productions of the community’s youth. The youth had created “multi-media compositions” that the community gathered to celebrate (p. 229). Their compositions were part of a community project and as such are a part of literate practices the community engaged in together: some members of the community engaged in producing the content, some merely viewed the content, and others did both. The creation, distribution, and viewing of the community-centered texts are indicative of community-centered literate practices.

The following data analysis reveals that approximately half of the attention paid to “new media” in the four journals from 2000-2010 is a discussion framed in terms of composing in contemporary society as illustrated through the above four minor categories (“digital texts,” “foundational knowledge, “composing technologies,” and “community and literacy”). The discussion, thus, tends to be forward-looking (as opposed to being tied to past practices or discussions) in regards to digital products, composing technologies used to produce digital texts, foundational knowledge, and the communities in which literate practices occur. These themes illustrate the attention scholars pay to texts and literacies developed and practiced outside of the academy, even as scholars bring those texts into academic scrutiny and discussion in scholarship and classroom conversations.
Fifteen of the articles categorized as *composing in contemporary society* (22% of the category’s texts) focused on “digital texts,” using key words such as “media” (and its variants: new media, multimedia, digital media), “digital” (and its variants: digitized, digital divide), and “recording.” All of these articles make a point of describing new texts that can only be produced and distributed in contemporary digital environments. Some articles focus particularly on new media (Cushman, 2004a), others review concepts of media as texts and the uses of multiple media to craft texts (Wysocki, 2001; Hocks, 2003; Kress, 2005). Still more articles reference particular types of writing that can only be crafted in digital environments (deWinter & Vie, 2008; Anderson, 2008). With the largest percentage of articles (15 articles or 22%) in the data set contributing to conversations about “digital texts,” “new media” is mostly described as a particular type of composition: a particular product.

An example of a text in the “digital texts” category is Anderson’s (2008) “The Low Bridge to High Benefits: Entry-level Multimedia, Literacies, and Motivation.” The “key word” “new media” is a keyword for the “digital texts” category, and it is not only a key word Anderson himself uses, but it is the focus of his text, as his research question suggests: “Could it be that low-bridge new media technologies provide the right mix of challenges and ease of use for instructors and students to develop a sense of control, creativity, and flow?” (Anderson, 2008, p. 44). He further describes “low-bridge media activities” as well as “multimedia modes of reading and writing” (p. 45). Although Anderson’s emphasis is on low-bridge new media, he examines how even *basic digital*
technologies afford composers a chance to break from print traditions and craft meaningful digital texts.

Additionally, this article is representative of the minor category “digital texts” in that Anderson theorizes about types of “new media,” specifically digital new media texts. He argues, for example, that some projects might “reside very close to traditional conceptions of alphabetic literacy. […] However, new literacies converge with these familiar composing skills” (p. 47), such as using HTML to link to integral sources. Anderson also speaks to technical needs and skills in order to craft digital texts—which instructors need to think through before assigning projects. He writes, “As instructors and students move further away from alphabetic literacies, technical things and skills become more central to the composing process” (p. 48). Here, his argument centers on what is needed to produce a digital text.

Finally, Anderson speaks to the “motivational potential of multimedia projects,” emphasizing an importance for bringing digital texts into a writing course to make transferable skills more apparent to students. For example, Anderson argues, “Not only did the functional literacies developed by ‘learn[ing] to use the program’ translate into visual literacies, this process deepened [the student’s] understanding of the collage genre and the poem” (p. 51). Anderson’s final points in the text revolve around students’ multimedia slideshows, which they produced specifically for his course. Anderson’s emphasis on digital texts as artifacts and on digital texts as assignments broadening rhetorical skills and perspectives captures the characteristic focus of texts placed in the “digital texts” category; that is, articles in this category focus on “new media” as an
electronic, digitally composed textual product distinct to this contemporary technological moment for writers.

It’s useful to see Anderson’s (2008) text as an example of composing in contemporary society because Anderson’s claims about the characteristics of contemporary writing push scholars think beyond print traditions. Anderson clearly demonstrates a move from print to multimodal pieces, adding to a scholarly conversation about what it means for our students and ourselves to be writing and producing text today. Seeing the piece in this way reveals that while the article is ostensibly about using multimodality and multimedia to teach composition, it is a piece which describes composing in contemporary society, especially in the eyes of other scholars. In this way, Anderson’s (2008) article contributes to the discipline’s work of reinventing definitions of rhetoric and composition that fit a contemporary society where writing technologies and traditional constructions of literacy are both prevalent. Whereas many educators from other disciplines still see the English Department as teaching conventional writing, Anderson and others demonstrate how the definition of text is shifting, and an expanded awareness of effective writing for both academic and non-academic contexts is needed.

Articles about “foundational knowledge,” as a minor category of scholarly conversations, review knowledge that comes earlier in the field’s history (George, 2002) or specifically call for new knowledge to be made about the current state of composition (Brooks, 2009). “Foundational knowledge” is a prevalent scholarly conversation, accounting for 20% (14 articles) of the data set. As such, this category is essential to conversations about composing in contemporary society because it specifically calls for
refined knowledge of composition and paying attention to foundational understanding of contemporary writings that may or may not be linked to past discussions in rhetoric and composition (again, think of Shauf’s discussion of an electronic grammar). Whereas “digital texts” (22% of the data set) is concerned with what products might be composed in the 21st century, “foundational knowledge” suggests how such products are understood as compositions. Articles sorted into “foundational knowledge” are interested in (false) dichotomies and (presumed) binaries (Prior, 2005) and explore how our understanding of composition has developed (Ranker, 2007). Still other scholars call for models that are applicable to current trends in writing and writing research (Bruce, 2009). Not only do articles in this category call for an expansion on foundational knowledge via new research and scholarship, but this scholarly conversation establishes the shifting trends of rhetoric and composition in regards to 21st century texts (Reid, 2003).

As noted above, a representative article in the “foundational knowledge” minor category of scholarly conversations is Shauf’s (2003) “The Problem of Electronic Argument: A Humanist’s Perspective.” In this article, Shauf presents a foundational discussion by outlining a visual grammar of electronic rhetoric. Her piece is unique in that she specifically outlines a grammar—going so far as to mark particular grammatical rules: “The second visual grammar is the logic of space” (p. 34). On the other hand, her piece is representative in that she bridges knowledge produced earlier in the field with the types of writing being produced in the contemporary society: she describes why a humanist approach to contemporary writing specifically needs a foundational grammar
for electronic rhetoric. For example, Shauf writes about her response to a student who asked about a text’s functionality:

Now *functionality* is a programmer’s word, and it is a good one in the context of computer programming. […] Obviously, functionality makes no sense in the context of the essay: nor does it make much sense in the humanist’s vocabulary.

(p. 33)

Here, Shauf describes why a grammar is needed: much of the work contemporary scholars attempt—both in their research and teaching—is not a part of their own disciplinary knowledge. Only some rhetoric and composition scholars know much about computer programming, but when writing and speaking about issues such as “new media,” an understanding of such (and similar) terms as functionality are important to moving forward.

In order to compose—and teach composition—in the 21st century, scholars need a grammar of electronic rhetoric; scholars need to understand what concepts and notions undergird contemporary compositions. Shauf’s piece—a text that reads partially about a graduate seminar and partially about grammars of electronic rhetoric—underscores a need to theorize about contemporary writing. Shauf ends her text with a discussion about redefining the discipline. She writes, “Nevertheless, it is our job to foster carefully considered rhetorical […] ambitions in students so they are continually asking, as we do, what lies beyond ‘beyond’” (p. 37). Here, Shauf describes the work of rhetoric and compositionists as disciplinary redefinition. Following suit with Selfe (1999), Shauf
(2003) pushes the field to progress—developing new theories of writing—just as she asks her students to think beyond traditional notions of academic writing.

The third minor category included in this major category is “composing technologies.” This category is similar to the category on “digital texts,” but “composing technologies” articles focus on the *types of technologies* available to develop texts—both traditional and new. This category might also be known as *composing or meaning making tools* whereas the “digital texts” category focused on the *products writers compose*. Articles in the “composing technologies” category account for 7% (5 articles) of the data set. Some of these articles have a variety of technologies at their cores (Harrison, 2000) while others speak more specifically about hypertext or videogames (Hocks, 2003; Brooke, 2007). All of the articles in this category, however, focus on types of technologies that can be used to produce contemporary writing. For example, texts that describe hypertext as a “composing technology” (Rice, 2007) demonstrate how hypertext is used to craft new forms of writing by linking one document or text to another, creating new pathways for readers. Authors contributing to this conversation include hypertext as a “composing tool” not as a textual product (which would place hypertext in the “digital texts” category). Hypertext forcefully reveals the always-present potential for text to be non-linear (Wysocki, 2007). For example, Wysocki (2007) suggests hypertext may help demonstrate “how some new compositional logics might be made to fit” academic expectations of writing (p. 283). She goes on to suggest that while hypertext is no longer as difficult to navigate as it was 1998, there are new composing tools that create similar new compositional logics which are only beginning to be explored, such as new video
gaming systems (Wysocki suggests the Wii) and new software programs (she suggests Audacity). Video games are also seen as a way of creating texts. Writers use video games as writing technologies not only to read stories and enhance their literate practices but to craft their own, new stories as well (Gee, 2003). Scholars see new “composing technologies” as enhancing new modes of *composing in contemporary society*. Without new tools, the texts that are the characteristic products of writing in the 21st century would not be possible. Where “digital texts” exist in the world, there must be ways to produce such texts, and scholars pay specific attention to what these new composing technologies are and how writers in non-academic settings use them.

Sorapure (2006) writes about one specific type of “composing technology,” Adobe Flash, and her discussion of Flash is indicative of the types of discussions scholars have when they contribute to conversations about “composing technologies.” For Sorapure, Flash is the ultimate tool for crafting new media. More importantly, though, in her article, Sorapure is specifically concerned with what it means to use software to compose, as many authors contributing to this category are. She begins her text by describing:

> the shaping influence of software on our students’ and on our own writing processes and products. While it is clear that software doesn’t determine what or how people write, it is equally clear that difference programs off different possibilities within which writers work and that these possibilities, in turn, contribute to our understanding of what writing is and does. (p. 412)
Sorapure’s emphasis on the relationship between software and written products suggests the importance of contemporary composing technologies and the role they play in how writing is understood. Her article is representative of scholars’ interests in understanding how writing changes when “composing technologies” are thought of broadly.

Sorapure’s text is also demonstrative of *composing in contemporary society* (major category). While examining text, image, code, and comment (four features of Flash), Sorapure explains the ways in which software—and the compositions it makes possible—illustrate “the definition of writing stretched and transformed” (p. 413). She explains how Flash makes multimodal composing for the web possible, as the program “[brings] together text, image, animation, sound, and video and for outputting these multimodal combination in relatively small files” (p. 413). In this one statement, Sorapure describes two particular aspects of what *composing in contemporary society* is: contemporary texts draw on a variety of communicative modes, and they are concerned with digital formatting (especially file size). The mention of file size is particularly interesting because it suggests contemporary composition relies on modes of distribution different than those expected of earlier composition genres.

While Sorapure’s text is put forth as being about Flash, the text has a second layer contributing to discussions of what it means to write for contemporary audiences using contemporary “composing technologies.” As such, the text is an attempt to define how rhetoric and compositionists—and larger groups of readers and writers—understand composing technologies: in the 2000s, composing technologies are more than paper, ink, and word processing programs; according to Sorapure, composing technologies also
includes Flash. Sorapure argues, “different programs offer different possibilities within which writers work and that these possibilities, in turn, contribute to our understanding of what writing is and does” (p. 412). This statement, central to her article, suggests “composing technologies” play an integral role in how scholars understand “what writing is” in contemporary society. While multimodal work is acknowledged in the discipline, as is digital writing, Sorapure defines the work of rhetoric and composition in regards to many different types of writing—types of writing the larger public both embraces and decries. Arguments such as Sorapure’s demonstrate a need to elaborate on rhetoric and composition’s social relevance. As a means of connecting to earlier modes of writing, Sorapure does include discussions of Flash’s text and comment features. These features link Flash compositions to social expectations of what it means “to write” while putting forth a claim about what writers are actually doing and how they are actually producing texts when they compose in contemporary society. Sorapure further claims, “writing is actually quite richly employed and plays diverse and important functions” in Flash, and because Flash is used to produce numerous texts on the web, Sorapure argues Flash is indicative of contemporary composing practices outside of the university.

Just one of five articles in the “composing technologies” category, Sorapure’s (2006) article is part of a minor conversation scholars in the discipline are having. More important to the discipline are discussions about what types of texts are produced (“digital texts” accounts for 22% of the data). Therefore, though the discipline is interested in having conversations about writing technologies—especially recently available software—it does not account for substantial discussions (this topic will be
returned to in a later section) between 2000-2010. Still, conversations about “composing technologies” contribute to an understanding of *composing in contemporary society.*

“Community and literacy” is the last minor category informing the scholarly conversation of *composing in contemporary society,* accounting for 3% of the data set (2 articles). Scholarly conversations about “community and literacy” are prevalent in articles focusing on specific community literacies and those literate habits that are not explained simply by talking about “reading” and “writing.” Some of these literacies seem traditional, old, or out of popular use (Rumsey, 2009) while other pieces are on the cutting edge of digital composition (Hull, 2003). These articles also challenge the notion of traditional or autonomous literate practices (Street, 1984). Expanded notions of literacy allow scholars to understand digital literacy as integral to modern concepts of composing. “Community and literacy,” then, as a minor category, is also integral to the major category and overarching scholarly conversation. Without an expanded notion of literacy—Street’s (1984) notion of ideational literacy exploded beyond the New London Group’s (1996) multiliteracies—21st century composition is the same as 19th century composition.

I identified Rumsey’s (2009) “Heritage Literacy: Adoption, Adaptation, and Alienation of Multimodal Literacy Tools” with the “key words” “heritage literacy,” and “culture.” These “key words” demonstrate themes that, along with the vignettes Rumsey uses to craft her argument, mark Rumsey’s article as representative of the content and purposes underpinning the minor category “community and literacy.” Rumsey begins her text with ethnography-like field notes: she describes an interviewee’s Amish
surroundings and the women’s “plain, darkly colored cotton dresses without pattern or embellishment or even buttons” (p. 573-4). With details like these, Rumsey situates her writing within the confines of the Amish community, and she further situates some literate practices within the same confines. She writes, “Heritage literacy, then, describes how literacies and technology uses are accumulated across generations through a decision-making process” (p. 576). The article then moves away from Amish literacies to include a more in-depth discussion of heritage literacy as seen through African American narrative quilting processes. In the article, Rumsey argues the literate practices of quilting play a central role in the African American community, situating the article as one about communities and about “community and literacy.”

Rumsey’s ideological approach to literacy is indicative of *composing in contemporary society*. Composing includes a broad spectrum of activities, especially when those activities are located within—and illustrative of—particular communities’ literate practices. Rumsey also argues heritage literacy “is multimodal” and “emphasizes ‘codified sign systems’ [...] as much as it emphasizes more traditional literacies” (p. 576). Her definition of heritage literacy casts a wide net over literate practices in a given community. However, the emphasis on community is what really places the text within the *composing in contemporary society* category. There is a growing desire to link home and academic literacies, to help students and researchers make sense of literacies outside of the academic experience. Contemporary composition is built on a variety of literacies and composition genres. Print literacy is no longer the only means of composing—now, it is just one available means of writing.
Throughout her text, Rumsey describes two distinct discussions of practices associated with heritage literacy (Amish literate practices and African American quilting practices). Heritage literacy is tied to the discipline’s development because heritage literacy—which employs multiple modes—could be one example of non-digital “new media” theories (Wysocki, 2004). African American narrative quilts may be considered “new media” as current generations rediscover and reappropriate such quilting practices. Rumsey opens a window to new ideas of composing, pushing scholars in the field to grow and change, to think critically about heritage literacy, and to incorporate heritage literacy under its umbrella.

| Table 7: Frequency of articles in the largest major category of scholarly conversations |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Composing in contemporary society               | Count | Percentage |
| Digital texts                                   | 15    | 22%        |
| Foundational knowledge                         | 14    | 20%        |
| Composing technologies                          | 5     | 7%         |
| Community and literacy                          | 2     | 3%         |
| Total                                           | 36    | 52%        |

*Composing in contemporary society* accounts for the largest amount of articles within the data set: at 52% of the data set, scholars most frequently contribute to this conversation. The frequency of articles in major and minor conversations (table 7 above) shows scholars in the discipline tend to write about products, foundational knowledge, tools, and community writing more than they write about composing processes. Instead, they focus on contemporary texts rather than individuals’ habits of textual production.

Although discussions of writers’ processes were once part of a more prevalent conversation (for example, expressivism and peer writing groups were once a part of published scholarship and scholars’ disciplinary conversations), this is not a concern in regards to “new media.” Scholars writing during the time period of this study are not
concerned with how individuals compose texts via processes. Instead, they are concerned with what types of texts are produced (22%), what knowledge and discussions lay the foundation for new textual products (20%), how “new media” can be incorporated into the classroom, and what writing means for the discipline’s development.

A majority of articles contribute to conversations about composing in contemporary society (52%, as noted above). Such an emphasis on composing in a more universal sense points to scholars’ attempts to make their profession relevant to outsiders and society at large during this time period. Although many scholars are familiar with students’ resistance to taking writing courses, scholars continually seek to identify ways that writing is important beyond the confines of the university campus. For example, Hull (2003) and Rumsey (2009) specifically describe literate practices of different, specific communities. On the other hand, scholars such as Sorapure (2006) and Anderson seek to demonstrate how compositions and composing technologies from outside the university can be used inside the university, making an appeal for the importance of understanding compositions from outside the university as a relevant topic for rhetoric and composition scholars (work Wysocki, 2007, also engages in as she describes how non-academic texts are crafted). Scholars spend the most time describing “new media” as a way to show writing’s relevancy to society and show how the public utilize non-academic writing practices.

While I describe this as a shift in the field, a study covering more than a decade of scholarship might uncover this interesting emphasis on composing in contemporary society as more than just a new lens but perhaps even a maturation of the field. This need
to describe the importance of the field to outsiders might be seen in other time periods and movements as well. Such a shift toward the importance of the discipline outside of the university might also have been an instigating factor in the founding of *Written Communication* in the 1980s or similar movements embracing discourse analysis. However, in the context of the ten-year span from 2000-2010, the field’s major scholarly conversation about *composing in contemporary society* highlights scholars’ need to both rationalize and broaden their work beyond the scope of the traditional academic paper and the traditional first-year composition classroom.

Within discussions about *composing in contemporary society*, 22% of the articles are about “digital texts” and 20% are about “foundational knowledge.” Together, articles in these areas account for 42% of the data set—almost half of the data set and more than half of the *composing in contemporary society* conversation. Because 42% of conversations are invested in foundational knowledge underlying digital and new media texts, the main conversations in the field related to “new media” are devoted to describing how these texts *count* as texts in the eyes of the writing public. Scholars are more invested in describing universal concepts of writing rather than discussing the professional work of the field (concepts described in *composing in the university* and *composing in the discipline*). These articles show a perceived need to describe what non-academic writing is and what contemporary writing artifacts looks like.

Additionally, scholars in the field spend more time thinking about products (“digital texts,” 22%) than they do about tools (“composing technologies,” 7%). Although scholars still discuss new composing technologies, the computers and writing
The above breakdown (table 8) does not only point to scholars’ continued efforts to make the field relevant to society. These conversations also demonstrate how scholars think about “new media.” Because conversations about composing in contemporary society are the most prevalent, conversations about “new media” focus on non-academic writing. While some scholars strive to make “new media” pertinent to the university community and to rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development, most of the conversations about “new media” suggest “new media” is more important to non-academic settings than it is to academic contexts. In this regard, “new media” is brought into scholarly conversations about composing in the university and composing in the discipline via arguments about the relevance of the field and via arguments about the

subfield may be moving away from such discussions and focusing more on textual products rather than the ways those products are composed. Frequently, computers and writing has been described as a subfield interested mostly in technologies (whether writing technologies are always good or whether scholars need to be more critical of technology, for example) (Barton, 1994; Moran, 2003). However, in discussions where “new media” is prominent, the subfield is driven instead by discussions of product, not technology. Scholars, then, are more concerned with compositions rather than with the technologies used to craft those compositions. Perhaps, a more accurate name for the subdiscipline would be “writing and computers” rather than “computers and writing.” Although technology is tied to textual products, the subfield may have always been more interested in textual products rather than the technologies used to craft them, but that hypothesis is beyond the purpose and purview of this study.
future of composing. In such conversations, the future of composing revolves around
digital texts produced using knowledge about how people engage in communication and
ever-developing composing technologies.\(^{27}\) Finally, the future of writing is demonstrated
by community practices: new modes of writing (“new media”) emerge out of community
needs and practices (such as producing community videos or a return to quilting
narratives).

“Digital texts,” “writing technologies,” “foundational knowledge,” and
“community and literacy” are all minor categories contributing integral building blocks
for scholarly conversations about what it means to compose in contemporary society. As
demonstrate, articles in these minor categories contribute to an overall impression of
contemporary composition. The overarching category helps highlight current modes of
writing as largely digital while stemming from pre-conceived notions of writing. This
category draws together a variety of writing, composing, and literacy-related theories to
describe composing in contemporary society. Composing in contemporary society is one
discussion scholars in the field engage in to mark the field as relevant, but this category
of conversation indicates relevancy to a writing public. The conversation is a large,
universal look at composing. Scholars use other types of conversations to indicate the
field’s relevancy in academic communities from introductory courses to writing
programs, from professional development to discussions with the administration, which is
what scholars contribute to in conversations about composing in the university.

\(^{27}\) Both Gitelman (2006) and Wysocki (2007) suggest composing technologies are consistently being
updated and developed, surpassing previous composing technologies in purpose, type, and potential for
composing.
Composing in the university

*Composing in the university* is a category of scholarly conversations in which scholars seek to describe and unpack what it means to compose in regards to larger academic entities and institutions. *Composing in the university* accounts for 28% of the data set (20 articles). At 28% of the data set, it is the second most common category of scholarly conversations, showing the practical attention scholars pay to their professional work and lives. This major category explains how the discipline’s scholars discuss the role rhetoric and composition studies plays within the university at large and the field’s connections with students, with other disciplines, and even with institutions outside the academy (through, for example, copyright law) during the 2000s.

Contributing to scholarly conversations about *composing in the university* are two minor categories: “classroom context” (17% or 12 articles of the data set) and “institutional context” (11% or 8 articles of the data set). Articles that exemplify discussions of “classroom context” focus on how the discipline uses contemporary definitions of writing to teach and assess composition. In these articles, scholars are concerned with bringing contemporary composition into the classroom in regards to classroom activities, main class assignments, programmatic development, and both individual student assessment and programmatic assessment. For example, Clayton, Cantrell, Legg, and Lumpkins (2003) contribute to the conversation about the “classroom context” of new media and rhetoric and composition by describing a collaborative writing project they facilitated across two colleges and one university. In this project, students
from the three schools collaborated to produce a profile of a campus organization; the profile would be produced for internet publication. This article is an example of “classroom context” because it describes in depth the theoretical background and the assignment and assessment procedures for a new media collaborative project across several first-year composition courses. Other articles contributing to this minor scholarly conversation also focus on practices, theory, and products central to or created within college composition classes of varying levels.

Articles contributing to the minor scholarly conversation of “institutional context” are concerned with how contemporary understandings of writing affect the discipline’s status in the university community, especially in its home departments (usually English), the development of the profession (through faculty development, mentorship, and professional organizations), and the ethical demands of the profession in regards to issues of intellectual property. One article illustrating this minor scholarly conversation is DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill’s (2005) “Infrastructure and Composing: The When of New-Media Writing.” In this text, the authors describe the institutional context—especially politics of funding—as playing a major role in the accessibility of computers and the possibility of crafting new media texts in the classroom. They argue, “we focus on the institutional infrastructures and cultural contexts necessary to support teaching students to compose with new media. These often invisible structures make possible and limit, shape and constrain, influence and penetrate all acts of composing new media” (p. 16, emphasis added). Articles with similar emphases on the relationship between
academic institutions and new media compositions are a part of this minor scholarly conversation.

“Classroom context” is a minor scholarly conversation concerned with how scholars understand their work in the context of college classrooms: especially English and college writing classrooms. Representative “key words” in this category include “pedagogy,” “student,” and “assessment.” Articles labeled with the “key word” “pedagogy” specifically discuss pedagogical theories, pedagogical techniques, and pedagogical concerns such as examples of student work, examples of prompts, or examinations of class content (Kitchens, 2006; Lundin, 2008). These “key words” demonstrate classroom context as a category of scholarly conversation especially concerned with how to enhance the teaching and learning of writing (as defined in the two previously discussed major categories).

Texts similar to Odell and Katz’s (2009) “‘Yes, T-shirt!’: Assessing Visual Composition in the ‘Writing’ Class” are written from the perspective of composition instruction and have a specific pedagogical purpose. Odell and Katz’s (2009) text is representative of articles contributing arguments to conversations about “classroom contexts.” Although this article in particular acknowledges the role technologies such as computers and new software have played in moving notions of composition forward, the article’s focus is on assessment practices. Therefore, I identified this article with the “key word” “assessment.” The t-shirt Odell and Katz describe was handed in as a final assignment for a Rhetoric and Writing course. Odell and Katz claim, “The rhetorical effect of the T-shirt depended at least as much on its layout as on its verbal content” (p.
suggesting what instructors must take into account when assessing projects. They describe instructors’ lack of preparation in regards to multimodal assessment and advance arguments about assessing such projects throughout the article. The article is situated within the larger context of assessment research, making its more apparent purpose focused on assessment in the writing classroom. With such an emphasis on assessment as an instructor’s tool, this text exemplifies the type of articles situated within the scholarly conversation of “classroom contexts.”

Additionally, Odell and Katz (2009) highlight the need to define the discipline. Throughout the article, Odell and Katz assume instructors may be unfamiliar with multimodal compositions and with terminology associated with such work. They write, “Instructors may have intuitions that a particular page design doesn’t quite ‘work,’ or that an image seems particularly effective (or ineffective). But how do they articulate the basis for their intuitions [and] assess students’ use of visuals?” (p. W198). Odell and Katz suggest scholars must reassess the texts they research and teach (the scholarly work of discipline members) as well as what and how scholars teach and assess student-produced compositions. Although assessment procedures are largely meant to be reliable, valid measurements of student work (compositions), Odell and Katz point out through their extensive literature review that assessment is an involved process. They argue, “emphasis on audience and purpose is consistent with current thinking in assessment theory as well as in composition instruction” (p. 203) but such an emphasis is insufficient for multimodal assessment because it does not take into account questions of “identify[ing] salient features of a visual image,” “choos[ing] specific elements of format—typography,
white space, inset boxes,” or even principles guiding “the inclusion of still and/or moving images in verbal text” (p. W203). Therefore, Odell and Katz’s (2009) text argues for a redefinition of the field along the lines of how writing is assessed.

Although “classroom context” focuses particularly on what happens inside the classroom from a teacher’s perspective (and sometimes a student’s), the “institutional context” category describes a larger academic setting. In the minor category “institutional context,” “key words” include professional organizations (CCCC, NCTE), discussions of different types of “writing programs” (Dyehouse, Pennell, & Shamoon, 2009; Melzer & Zemliansky, 2003), “tenure” (Ball, 2004), and questions of “access” and “infrastructure” (DeVoss, Cushman, & Grabill, 2005). The ideas represented by this category explain how scholars in the field fit into the larger university context, how they become scholars in the field, and how the field evolves.


new media scholarship has a necessary aesthetic component because of its designed, multimodal elements, and because these multiple modes can be read in conjunction with written text to form the text’s meaning. So that authors and readers might come to expand the field’s notions of what could be considered and valued as composition scholarship, I analyze a new media text […] to show how
its video-editing interface and navigational structure make meaning in ways appropriate for scholarly publication. (p. 404)

Ball argues for new media’s acknowledgement in scholarly exercises, ultimately suggesting universities begin to take new media scholarship more seriously, especially as such scholarship is now more pertinent to the field than ever before (how can an instructor teach “new media” without also being able to create it and use it effectively for her own purposes?). Ball’s piece identifies issues within the larger university system. An argument about the need for “new media” tenure requirements (or at least a recognition of new media scholarship where tenure is concerned) is an argument sustained within a larger “institutional context”: such an argument would not only apply to rhetoric and composition scholars. Additionally, such an argument shifts the definition of the field. As new media scholarship of the kind Ball describes becomes more prominent and more acceptable, the field must be defined as a one that produces—and encourages the production of—both traditional and new media texts.

Rife’s (2007) article about fair use brings rhetoric and composition into conversation with legal institutions. Fair use and copyright laws impact numerous institutions including the university, and Rife’s discussion centers on what the intersection of fair use and writing classrooms means for teachers and students. Here, she describes how two institutions (universities and copyright laws) interact, especially when composition means more than printed text, even examining lawsuits where universities and their students were under investigation for copyright infringement, especially filesharing (p. 155). She opens her article stating, “Writing teachers have always had to
contend with plagiarism” (p. 154) and argues for a better understanding of fair use. She claims, “fair use was not at the center of composing before digital technologies and networked environments shaped teaching” (p. 154) and “have made ‘classroom’ writing more visible to the outside world than it ever has been before” (p. 156). Emphasizing how composition may benefit from paying more attention to fair use is representative of how contemporary scholarly conversations argue for rhetoric and composition’s fit into various “institutional contexts.”

Both the scholarly conversations of “classroom context” and “institutional context” are encompassed by the major category of scholarly conversation labeled composing in the university. The category situates the work scholars do for students, themselves, and the university as one element of how the field evolves and defines itself. Both Ball (2004) and Rife (2007) showcase the institutional dilemmas rhetoric and composition scholars face, from their own scholarship to their students’ assignments in terms of larger university and legal institutions. The overarching category of composing in the university, exemplified by Ball’s (2004) and Rife’s (2007) texts, also demonstrates a shift in the field.

Authors contributing to conversations about composing in the university suggest scholars must define their status on campus and in relationship to outside institutions in order to move forward. This is not a new concept, and, as noted in Chapter 1, disciplines are partially structured by the ways outsiders understand the discipline. During the decade this study focuses on, rhetoric and composition scholars do attempt to make their studies relevant to the rest of the university. Sometimes, this means rhetoric and
compositionists must work against preconceptions of scholarship (i.e., printed, published texts) (Ball, 2004), and other times, this means rhetoric and composition scholars must pay more attention to how copyright laws and their work (both their scholarship and their work with students’ texts) intersects, challenges, and is challenged by those laws. Scholars in the field define the discipline based on such growing issues. Just as scholars discuss “new media” in conversations about *composing in the university* in an attempt to make themselves relevant to an academic community, they also engage in conversations contributing to the unity and cohesion of the discipline. When scholars discuss *composing in the discipline*, they narrow their discussion to one that aims to meet the specific needs of the discipline during the 2000s.

**Composing in the discipline**

Whereas *composing in contemporary society* focuses on understanding composing practices in contemporary culture, *composing in the discipline* focuses on developing a disciplinary understanding of composing. The end goal of *composing in contemporary society* is to understand what writers are doing, but the end goal of *composing in the discipline* is to establish common disciplinary terms about composing, especially in regards to contemporary texts such as new media compositions, that are acceptable for the 2000s.

*Composing in the discipline* encompasses one minor category, “issues about and defining modern and traditional concepts of composing,” which accounts for 20% (14 articles) of the data set. In this category of scholarly conversations, traditional definitions are used to ground an understanding of modern composition. New theories of writing are
extrapolated from traditional definitions. These new theories might include theories of “multimodality” (Wysocki, 2005; Birr Moje, 2009), and, in fact, theories of “multimodal composition” are the most frequent “key words” appearing in this category. Along with theories of multimodal writing are expanded notions of “rhetoric” (Hocks, 2003; Cushman, 2004; Brooks & Mara, 2007). Notions of composition are expanded in this category of scholarly conversations through the frequent use of design, denoted by key words such as “design,” “available design,” and “codified design.” Among the other key words in this category are “modes,” “rhetoric(s),” and “rhetorical principles.” These key words or thematic patterns suggest the discipline’s contemporary definitions of composition frequently incorporate theories of rhetoric, communication systems, and symbols other than print-linguistics. This diverse array of key words suggests scholars have reappropriated theories from other fields to strengthen, shift, and broaden theories of what it means to write and compose as defined by rhetoric and compositionists.

*Composing in the discipline* is a broad category, encompassing scholarly conversations including traditional understandings of writing while pushing the boundaries of how the discipline labels and describes writing. The category explains how such a diverse array of ideas comes together under one particular field. Articles that are a part of the overarching conversation about *composing in the discipline* seek to explain what it means “to compose” by critically examining a breadth of writing definitions. Additionally, *composing in the discipline* identifies the field’s recurring struggle to define itself and the subject matter with which it is concerned (Berlin, 1993; Connors, 1997, 2000; Olson, 2002; Knievel, 2009).
In an article representative of this category, George (2002) argued, “throughout the history of writing instruction in this country the terms of debate typical in discussions of visual literacy and the teaching of writing have limited the kinds of assignments we might imagine for composition” (p.11). In this text, George is especially concerned with visual literacy as a component of teaching composition and rhetoric. She asserts, “there remains much confusion over what is meant by visual communication, visual rhetoric, or, more simply, the visual and where or whether it belongs in a composition course” (p. 13). George’s (2002) article, “From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing,” moves scholars toward an understanding of what composition means in the 2000s. George implicitly defines composition as multimodal, opening the article with discussions of non-print linguistics arguments her students have composed and moving toward an argument about how limited writing has been, especially in the composition classroom. Rather than limiting assignments to print texts and basic visuals like PowerPoint presentations, George argues composition should be defined more broadly, making both teachers and students aware of visual literacy as one particularly compelling mode of communication, especially in a college context.

Brooks and Mara (2007) build on George’s (2002) argument in another representative text: they apply a similar discussion of traditional versus contemporary understandings of composition to new media texts. Their article, “The Classical Trivium: A Heuristic and Heuretic for New Media and Digital Communication Studies,” demonstrates both historical definitions of writing and contemporary notions of composing. Brooks and Mara present the classical trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and
dialectic) “as a heuristic for interpreting contemporary theories, practices, and curriculums of new media” (n.p.). Basing their project on historical definitions of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, the authors merge classical definitions with traditional definitions (traditions from the 19th and 20th centuries that brought rhetoric and composition together as a discipline in the American university) and bring those definitions to bear on new media production and scholarship. For example, Brooks and Mara argue, “the modern grammatical component of the trivium seems […] threatened or marginalized […]. Rhetoricians often find [new media] texts disappointingly a-rhetorical and dialecticians find their eloquent constructs problematic or reductive, and remain understandably vigilant against canonization of new media texts” (n.p.). In discussing the trivium with respect to “new media,” Brooks and Mara hope to bring classical grammar back to the forefront as a component of text production.

Both George (2002) and Brooks and Mara (2007) illustrate tensions between traditional definitions of writing and contemporary notions of composing. They argue scholars and teachers should maintain some traditional notions (rhetorical elements, for example) and apply them more fruitfully to new modes of writing (such as the visual and the auricular). Although their texts are both pedagogical discussions to some extent, their arguments are strong examples of “issues about/defining modern and traditional notions of composing.” More importantly, they address issues of disciplinary redefinition. If the definition of writing must change to meet the needs of contemporary society, then the definition of the discipline must shift accordingly as well.
Overarching category and theory

Composing frameworks

“New media” is an area of interest in current rhetoric and composition scholarship. As the field develops, scholars bring “new media” into their conversations through published articles. First, scholars attempt to describe rhetoric and composition as relevant to a broad audience. Conversations about composing in contemporary society are overarching conversations in which scholars describe writing from a non-academic perspective. The broad focus on writing suggests the discipline’s relevance across many areas. Such a broad focus also helps scholars make claims about “new media” as a type of text prevalent in contemporary forms of writing. Scholars focus their purview on “new media” texts when they engage in conversations about composing in the university. When scholars discuss composing in the university, they attempt to bridge contemporary notions of writing with academic work. Scholars suggest how contemporary compositions like “new media” are relevant to the classroom as well as to the contemporary university.

When discussing composing in the university, scholars bring the conversation close to home by writing about their professional work as teachers, as program coordinators, as members of professional organizations, and as members of overarching departments and administrative initiatives. Finally, scholars narrow their focus further and engage in more individual, discipline-building discussions when they become part of the scholarly conversation about composing in the discipline. When scholars engage in this conversation, they have narrowed their discussion to one of disciplinary unity and cohesion: they work to build the discipline’s understanding of what counts as “new
media,” as “writing,” and as material falling under the discipline’s purview. Scholars use these conversations as avenues through which they discuss contemporary composing frameworks and define the purpose and disciplinary identity of rhetoric and composition studies.

*Composing frameworks* is the overarching conversation scholars engage in when they discuss and construct arguments about “new media.” Frameworks are often described as foundational systems for making meaning; they are often the means by which a discipline is bounded (Pickering, 1990; 1992; Daly Goggin, 2009), and they offer a set of tools for understanding the work discipline members seek to concern themselves with or otherwise accomplish. If we think about *composing frameworks* as a set of tools that tells rhetoric and composition scholars how to understand what writing is, then the prevalence of discussions about *composing frameworks* suggests scholars are preoccupied with not just the types of texts being produced but all the tools and social context of how such texts are being produced. That scholars discuss *composing frameworks* suggests that during the ten years of scholarship I examined, scholars are interested in the ways social contexts and composing technologies influence writers and writing. Scholars are interested in the theoretical and epistemological tools that enable contemporary authors to compose in a variety of ways using multiple means.

Some frameworks are used to bound rhetoric and composition; when I discuss *composing frameworks*, I argue that over the ten years this study focuses on, from 2000 to 2010, rhetoric and composition scholars engage in conversations via published research that contribute to the boundaries of the discipline, and those boundaries are tied
to discussion and definitions of what it means “to compose.” During this time period, “new media” is one case through which scholars describe the *composing frameworks* bounding rhetoric and composition. As I describe below, each scholarly conversations contributes to a *composing framework* that encompasses numerous definitions of “writing” and “composing.” Through discussions about “new media” in society, in the university, and in the discipline, scholars expand the boundaries of rhetoric and composition, allowing members of the discipline to research, teach, and produce a variety of texts from narrative essays to researched articles based on case studies and experiments to multimedia productions, including movies, mash-ups, and webtexts. That all of the major categories of scholarly conversations contribute to developing *composing frameworks* suggests that rhetoric and composition is not a static field. Rather, as scholars continue to discuss and argue over *composing frameworks*, the field continues to be defined and redefined as scholars contribute new arguments to the discussion. The seven minor categories and three major categories of scholarly conversations can be explained by *composing frameworks* as an overarching category or scholarly conversation. All three major categories tell a piece of rhetoric and composition’s story; each conversation discipline members contribute to is a conversation whereby scholars seek to broaden the content the discipline encompasses, expanding the *composing frameworks* that bound the discipline.

*Composing in contemporary society* describes an interpretation and thorough understanding of what composing looks like in the 21st century, according to rhetoricians and compositionists. This conversation broadens the field’s *composing frameworks* by
allowing digital and community literate practices and textual constructions to be a part of rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary purview. The composing frameworks the field draws on no longer constrict scholars to studies of academic or traditional print-linguistic texts: now, our composing frameworks incorporate common texts used, produced, and shared in contemporary society.

Composing in the university is a conversation scholars engage in when they describe institutional issues scholars cannot circumvent: from their classroom dynamics and assignments to defining scholarship and tenure requirements, rhetoric and composition is entwined with the mechanism of the American university. By contributing to discussions about composing in the university, scholars emphasize and challenge the composing frameworks that the university community typically expects rhetoric and composition to study and teach. Scholars writing about composing in the university argue about the restrictions the university places on the field’s notion of composing frameworks, and they challenge the university to accept the expanded composing frameworks rhetoric and compositionists study and teach.

Scholars in the discipline consistently publish research in the vein of composing in the discipline: scholars contributing to this scholarly conversation work off of traditional definitions of rhetoric and writing to encompass, discover, and suggest new, evolving definitions of composing. Scholars contributing to this discussion are particularly interested in how the field defines composing frameworks and present arguments that broaden the scope of composing frameworks in the eyes of other rhetoric and compositionists. When scholars discuss composing in the discipline they describe
how more established *composing frameworks* are expanded for the contemporary discipline, incorporating new understandings of what it means to compose. “New media” becomes a part of the *composing framework* rhetoric and compositionists acknowledge, study, and teach via conversations about *composing in the (contemporary) discipline*.

These three categories—as evidenced by scholarship cited and described throughout the above analysis—demonstrate the perpetual problem of rhetoric and composition: what does the discipline do and study? Rhetoric and composition cannot afford to cease having these conversations about what it means to compose and how such questions are relevant to broad audiences. The disciplinary definition of *composing frameworks* cannot remain stagnant as the field develops and changes over time. The field’s current understanding of *composing frameworks* encompasses new media texts whereas previously accepted *composing frameworks* would not have accepted new media texts as within the field’s purview.

In reviewing the “key words,” minor categories, major categories, and the overarching framework, rhetoric and composition’s conversations about “new media” over the past ten years are descriptive of the discipline’s work and status. Each major category of conversation suggests what areas of interest are important to the field’s identity. As Daly Goggin (2009) suggests, published scholarship is indicative of disciplinary identity. Therefore, when scholars engage in conversations to explain, describe, and understand “new media,” they work to build disciplinary identity. An explanatory theory about the discipline’s status and identity emerges from the scholarly conversations: rhetoric and composition scholars reinvent definitions of the field that fit a
contemporary society where writing technologies and traditional constructions of literacy are both prevalent; the discipline is moving from universal discussions and descriptions of writing to field-specific discussions, and within this range of conversations are distinct concerns and anxieties about disciplinary relevance.

Because scholars in the field are so focused on discussing composition in contemporary society, rhetoric and compositionists are most engaged in describing the field’s relevance to society vis-à-vis ever-changing non-academic texts. Society and the university community still expect composing to refer to print-linguistic literate practices; rhetoric and composition scholars work to break down such autonomous ideas of literacy, especially relying on composing frameworks to do so. They devote much of their scholarly conversations to explaining how “new media” and other digital texts are contemporary forms of writing by discussing the texts and foundational, transferable knowledge about writing, as well as the technologies used to produce writing in the public sphere. The discipline’s identity, then, is dependent on how scholars in the discipline represent the discipline to society as well as to educational institutions. Finally, scholars engage in conversations that represent the discipline’s shifting identity and describe the identity in terms of the discipline’s definitions of writing, both past and present.

Berlin (1993) argues, “the work of rhetoric is to develop a lexicon that articulates the complex coding activity involved in writing and reading” (p. 109). In the 2000s, the work of rhetoric and composition seems to be explaining to outsiders what contemporary composition is, especially when digital writing technologies play such a vast role in the
developing discipline. Lauer (1984) and MacDonald (2007) comment on the rural, diffuse nature of rhetoric and composition studies. As a rural, diffuse discipline, rhetoric and composition has a wide array of research questions and objects; in order to keep a cohesive disciplinary identity, rhetoric and composition scholars define and re-establish a common focus. Unlike urban disciplines, discussions of disciplinarity are constant features unique to the rhetoric and composition studies. This constant feature is the need to assert the field’s relevance to others. Selfe (2009) suggests scholars take charge of “an opportunity to make our work increasingly relevant to a changing set of communicative needs in a globalized world” (p. 644). As scholars attempt to define composition and refine that definition for a society saturated with writing technologies, they work to solidify and re-situate themselves on campuses across the United States, and they work to build the cohesion of their discipline.

Contributions to each of the major categories of scholarly conversations described above attempt to define contemporary composing frameworks for understanding contemporary notions of both academic and non-academic writing. Additionally, researchers can utilize and reproduce these contemporary composing frameworks via personal writing, teaching, professional development, and scholarship. Defining a working framework that does not isolate scholars or stunt the discipline’s growth has been problematic throughout the discipline’s history, and current scholarship feeds into this rigorous, recurring work.
Implications and conclusions

In this chapter, I have examined and described the disciplinary development of rhetoric and composition studies through the lens of “new media.” As I have shown, current research in the discipline can be characterized by three major categories of scholarly conversation: *composing in contemporary society, composing in the university,* and *composing in the discipline.* These categories, explained by the overarching scholarly conversation of *composing frameworks,* demonstrate the ongoing need for and attempt to define frameworks for rhetoric and composition research and practice and frameworks for understanding what it means to compose in the 2000s. These conversations point to scholars’ anxieties about the relevancy of the field to the world, to the university, and to other rhetoric and compositionists.

The three major categories of conversations are areas where scholars have incorporated “new media” into the discipline. “Key words” and minor categories of conversations associated with each major category of conversation suggest ways scholars frame “new media” and their conversations about “new media.” As writing technologies change, composition in the 21st century becomes something new, and “new media” is one type of writing people produce using contemporary composing technologies. As scholars struggle to define what writing is, “new media” inevitably becomes a part of that definition. When scholars define the field in the context of the larger university and establish their places in the classroom, they do so by drawing on what they are prepared to teach and explaining how students and scholars will use this knowledge in their futures and their non-academic lives. Because new writing technologies are constantly
developing, because ideas of literacy and writing are expanding to include numerous methods of communicating and establishing an argument, “new media” has become one way that we explain our work and disciplinary positions to colleagues across campus and to our friends and neighbors in our communities.

Each main category establishes one scholarly conversation in the discipline that includes “new media.” While “new media” might still be housed, by and large, in media, art, film, and communications studies programs—where working in media such as television and other modes of visual design and communication are foregrounded—rhetoric and composition programs have more and more to bring to discussions of “new media.” By carefully building frameworks for understanding new composing technologies and the new types of writing that can be composed using these technologies, rhetoric and composition scholars incorporate “new media” into their subject areas. While the discipline may not be filled with “new media” experts, exploring how “new media” is a mode of writing, how this mode can be constructed, and how scholars might teach the construction of new media texts to others are means of sustaining the field and assuaging scholars’ anxieties about the field’s relevance. Definitions of writers and writing shift over time, evolving as society evolves. As such, writing has become largely digital and includes composing in multiple modes. “New media” is subsumed under current definitions of writing, becoming a part of rhetoric and composition’s definitional framework.

Rhetoric and composition has struggled with its area of expertise (Berlin, 1987; Nelms, 1993; Trimbur, 1993; Barton, 1994; Connors, 1997; Olson, 2002; Sanchez, 2005).
As the discipline continues to define itself, it reshapes itself, morphing into a contemporary avatar. While Kuhn (1962) describes massive paradigm shifts that move a discipline from one way of thinking to another, some paradigm shifts are less drastic than scholars might imagine. Rhetoric and composition has been through several paradigm shifts. According to Berlin (1993), rhetoric and composition has been through three such paradigm shifts, moving from liberal culture and expressionism to social constructionist rhetoric, finally moving to social epistemic rhetoric. Connors (1997) saw two paradigms, beginning with composition-rhetoric (what is often referred to as current-traditional rhetoric), and then shifting to contemporary rhetoric and composition (composing in contemporary society). Framing the discipline’s identity through incorporations of “new media” is not indicative of a paradigm shift. Rather, such disciplinary identification indicates a series of smaller, less drastic shifts within the field and within what counts as writing. “New media” fits into rhetoric and composition’s evolving understanding of itself as a discipline because “new media” fits the field’s scholarly conversations about writing.

In the next chapter, I examine “new media’s” incorporation into the discipline by analyzing scholars’ definitions of “new media.” Throughout the analysis, I argue that scholars’ definitions of “new media” reveal six categories of definitions. Although scholars define “new media” distinctly and disagreements between scholars about “new media” persist, “new media” is frequently defined as digital or multimodal. Scholars also put forth both practice-driven and concept-driven theories of “new media” and suggest the cultural timeliness of new media.
Chapter 5

Rhetoric and Composition Defines “New Media”

In her piece “Show, Not Tell: The Value of New Media Scholarship,” Ball (2004) claims:

The current trend in online scholarship is to name many of these texts [texts published in online, scholarly journals] new media scholarship. I believe this is an inaccurate use of the term as it defines new media too broadly to be useful in helping readers approach and interpret the various modes used in scholarship published on the World Wide Web. (p. 405)

Though Ball (2005) goes on to give her own definition of “new media” (a definition I discuss in further detail later in this chapter), I want to highlight her frustration with applying “new media” to any text published online. Ball is frustrated by the lack of a shared language about new media; I am frustrated by a lack of shared language as well. However, a lack of shared language about new media also stems from a lack of precise language. In Chapter 4, I described several different scholarly conversations through which “new media” is being incorporated into rhetoric and composition; the varied nature of such conversations suggests a lack of shared language. Throughout this chapter, I show that scholars in the field not only lack a shared language in regards to “new media,” but these scholars also use imprecise language in regards to the relationship between digital composition and “new media.” There is no one definition of “new media” in rhetoric and composition. Instead, scholars tend to go back and forth, presenting different
definitions from one article to the next. I draw on Ball’s frustrated energy and combine it with my own to focus this chapter—a piece of scholarship about new media as opposed to a text of new media scholarship—on the types of definitions rhetoric and composition scholars employ when discussing new media.

According to Schiappa (2003), definitions are always rhetorical, always contextualized. He argues scholars should approach definitions “as constituting rhetorically induced social knowledge […] or shared understanding among people about themselves, the objects of their world, and how they ought to use language” (p. 3). Schiappa further describes how different definitions might be evoked depending on audience. For example, scholars writing for a Research in the Teaching of English audience have defined “new media” as “other modes of communication besides language” (Ranker, 2007); whereas scholars writing for a Computers and Composition audience have discussed “new media” in terms a community more closely aligned with contemporary composing technologies might appreciate: “us people/dudes/pretty ladies (cyborgs all) have been writing code into interactive states of being, which allows us to behave in a society of networked consciousness” (Miles, et. al., 2003). Authors construct their definitions as they would any argument: with a particular audience in mind. Under the surface, then, definitions have disciplinary purposes: definitions are passages of texts in which scholars present arguments about the discipline to the different audiences comprising the discipline. By putting forth definitions, scholars present arguments that shape the discipline’s development.
Schiappa (2003) claims definitions are argumentative statements, and Zarefsky (2006) agrees, claiming a definition is:

a non-neutral characterization that conveys a positive or negative attitude about something in the course of naming it. The name is, in effect, an implicit argument that one should view the thing in a particular way. But the argument is never actually advanced. Rather, the definition is put forward as if it was uncontroversial and could be easily stipulated. (p. 404)

Zarefsky describes the unexpressed argument inherent in definitions and in the action of naming or using a particular key word. Schiappa (2003) and Zarefsky (2006) both suggest argument is often implicitly incorporated into a definition, and they further suggest readers read arguments into definitions just as authors write definitions (implicitly or explicitly) into definitions. Ball (2004) points out scholars “name many of these texts new media” (p. 405, emphasis added). Many scholars use the term “new media” without describing or defining it, a trend Ball is commenting on. For authors such as Dubisar and Palmeri (2010), who refer to a “Political Rhetoric and New Media class” without defining what “new media” is, a definition is not necessary: as Zarefsky points out, Dubisar and Palmeri have used a term “as if it was uncontroversial” (p. 404), but audiences assume they already know what Dubisar and Palmeri mean when they use the phrase “new media,” at least in the context of rhetoric and composition. Zarefsky (2006) further claims definitions are “a kind of strategic maneuvering” (p. 403). The definitions scholars invoke when they write about “new media” are such strategic maneuvers.
By critically analyzing rhetoric and composition scholars’ definitions of “new media” over the past ten years, I expose two distinct rhetorical, argumentative maneuvers. Scholars present arguments about “new media” through their definitions, alternatively suggesting rhetoric and composition scholars apparently, presumably, obviously, or naturally are concerned with “new media,” or rhetoric and composition scholars pay careful attention to identifying how and why “new media” fits into the field’s contemporary paradigm. More and more scholars assume “new media” has a place in rhetoric and composition; these scholars pay more attention to how “new media” is produced. Scholars who argue for the presence of “new media” in the classroom, the university, and the discipline’s professional development make a case that extends beyond the computers and writing subfield, arguing for the necessity of bringing “new media” into the field’s foundational knowledge and activities.

In the previous chapter, I described the scholarly conversations rhetoric and composition scholars engaged in when they discussed “new media’s” position within the field. The types of scholarly conversations incorporating “new media” into the discipline are also a part of scholars’ “strategic maneuvering.” In this chapter, I further examine scholars’ strategic maneuvering via their specific definitions of “new media.” Exploring specific definitions of “new media” in the field is especially important for understanding the field’s growth over the past ten years because exploring specific definitions is one way to reveal disciplinary development. As described in previous chapters, disciplines develop as arguments are presented, challenged, refuted, or accepted. While definitions are—on the surface—discussions of usage, they are also arguments about accepted or
growing knowledge in the field. Scholars’ “new media” definitions are arguments about what the field values, both in terms of scholarship and pedagogy. Throughout this chapter, I review published research in the discipline, uncovering rhetoric and composition’s specific definitions and articulations of “new media.” A systematic review and analysis of existing “new media” definitions in rhetoric and composition studies reveals a great deal about the field’s scholarly processes of meaning making and disciplinary formation.

Analysis of my article corpus demonstrates that definitions of “new media” in rhetoric and composition scholarship have characterized “new media” in six distinct ways; in this chapter, I elaborate on these six characterizations, but more significantly, I argue that these distinct characterizations reveal different strategic maneuvers involving disciplinary formation. Three of the characterizations suggest scholars present definitions to strategically position the field as a field where new media texts are obviously a part of the discipline. They suggest “new media” is simply the next type of text rhetoric and compositions study, and they focus on the practical aspects of creating and distributing such texts. The remaining three characterizations are used to argue for “new media’s” incorporation into the discipline, both in terms of theory and professional development. Scholars put forth arguments about “new media” in terms of practice-driven and concept-driven theories. Such theories bring “new media” under the purview of rhetoric and composition from a textual production standpoint and on the basis of foundational disciplinary knowledge. On the surface, scholars are simply defining “new media” and adding to the (im)precision of the field’s language about “new media.” However,
underpinning such definitions are arguments that move the field; with these arguments, the field develops to incorporate contemporary composing frameworks.

**Research Question**

In previous chapters, I have argued for the importance of explicit research questions as a means to prepare scholars for a rigorous analysis, and I began answering my overarching research questions. Chapter 4 described a ten-year history of scholarly conversations that answered *Question 1*: What is the history of “new media” within the discipline of rhetoric and composition? The present chapter considers how new media is understood by scholars in rhetoric and composition by asking:

*Question 2*: How do scholars define “new media” in rhetoric and composition’s printed scholarship?

- What are the strategic maneuvers scholars make when they invoke definitions of “new media”?
- How do these maneuvers influence disciplinary development?

This chapter analyzes definitions of “new media” in *CCC, RTE, C & C*, and *Kairos*. I suggest scholars strategically define “new media” through both practice-driven and concept-driven theories. Scholars spend more time defining “new media” through practice-driven theories in a strategic maneuver to describe the importance of “new media” texts to rhetoric and composition as a discipline invested in the teaching of writing.
**Methods**

For the analysis framing this chapter, I rely on content analysis (Huckin, 2002; 2004) and the rhetorical nature of definitions (Schiappa, 2003; Zarefsky, 2006) to understand the discipline’s “new media” definitions. In order to collect and code definitions of “new media,” I first had to articulate what constitutes a definition. In the context of this study, a definition of “new media” consists of a statement in which an author defines the phrase with either explicit use of the term *new media* or reference to it through some other means (referent pronouns or use of other related terms such as digital composition, or media) coupled with a definitional verb (especially “defines”), to be verb (is, are), or a signal phrase or active, argumentative verb (explain, suggest, attribute). Further, defining statements were not limited to sentence boundaries. Instead, statements consisted of one complete discussion of “new media.” Sometimes, such a statement was only one sentence long. Far more common were definitions developed over a series of sentences (two or more). Statements composed of several sentences did not take up different aspects of “new media”—rather, they further explained one particular aspect. Sometimes, though, an author defined “new media” in several places throughout a text. A few paragraphs or pages might separate these definitions. With such distinct separation, I counted these as separate definitions. Therefore, numerous articles had several distinct definitions of “new media,” which were coded as separate definitions. This process was described more fully in Chapter 3.

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28 Please see Chapter 3 for a more developed discussion of the methods used throughout this analysis.
Using the above criteria for definitions, I identified 68 definitions in the data set. Various articles contained several definitions of “new media” while other articles did not contain any: only 28 (40%) out of the 70 articles in the data set include a definition of “new media” (table 4 illustrates this data). In the 42 articles (60%) without definitions, authors assumed readers shared an understanding of the terminology. Scholars who do not define “new media” may contribute to the frustrations Ball (2004) and I share; although the term “new media” has been used in rhetoric and composition scholarship for over a decade, a shared language and easily recognized definition of “new media” are still not prevalent in the discipline. More than half of the articles did not include definitions, and these articles perpetuate the imprecise language associated with “new media” in contemporary rhetoric and composition. In articles containing more than one definition of “new media,” several paragraphs or pages typically separate the definitions. For example, Ball (2004) defined “new media texts as ones that juxtapose semiotic modes in new and aesthetically pleasing ways and, in doing so, break from print traditions so that written text is not the primary rhetorical means” (p. 403). Several paragraphs later, she goes on to define the differences between new media scholarship and scholarship about new media, “which uses modes other than only written text to form an argument” (p. 403). Then, another paragraph later, on the next page, Ball further
defines “new media” scholarship as “online scholarship that uses modes such as audio, video, images, and/or animation in addition to written text to make meaning” (p. 404). Each of these definitions, due to their distance from each other and their separate foci, was counted as a separate definition, accounting for 3 of the 68 definitions offered by scholars.

After reviewing articles for definitions of “new media,” I inductively arrived at a coding scheme to explain the definitions’ content. This initial coding scheme consisted of twelve separate codes, which emerged over a series of critical examinations of the definitions. After informal discussions of my preliminary results with colleagues, I reconsidered my early coding scheme, returned to the definitions, and refined my coding. After narrowing and refining the conceptual codes—seven in total—I solicited the help of a colleague to act as an inter-rater, as described in further detail in Chapter 3. The inter-rater and I had an initial simple reliability of 67% and a kappa of 0.6 for 20% of my data (15 definitions), which is considered to have a moderate strength in terms of reliability. Because I was not satisfied with this degree of reliability, I further refined my coding scheme, immersing myself yet again in the articles and definitions. In refining my coding, I narrowed the codes down to six conceptual codes with more precise definitions. Then, I secured the help of a second inter-rater. She reviewed the same 20% of the data. Our simple reliability was 87% with a kappa of 0.8, which is considered to be very strong. Satisfied with my refined coding scheme, I critically reviewed the codes and definitions with an eye toward overarching trends to understand what disciplinary, rhetorical work these definitions accomplish. I identified two particular trends emerging: definitions
developed either practice- or concept-driven theories. I returned to the definitions once more, coding for these two theories.

Results

The six concepts I arrived at through the inductive coding of these 68 definitions are: new media is digital; new media is multimodal; new media is interactive; new media is a break from print traditions; new media is a necessary concept for disciplinary and professional development; new media is a concept originating in other disciplines. Table 8 (below) includes brief explanations, key words, examples, frequencies, and percentages of each concept or definitional argument within the 68-definition data set and is described more fully below.

29 Please see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this process.
Table 8: Categories of “New Media” Definitions in the Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition Category (Conceptual Codes)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Key words</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New media is digital</td>
<td>Digital composition and digital environments are highlighted by linking the word “digital” with new media or by linking new media with digital writing technologies: software, computer systems/languages, networks, hypertext, on- and off-line programs. Texts may be multimodal, but the digital nature is much emphasized.</td>
<td>Digital, software, computer systems / languages, networks, hypertext, on- and off-line programs</td>
<td>“closely shaped by what the software can do” (Sorapure, 2006, p. 34)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is multimodal</td>
<td>The multimodal nature of new media is emphasized (digital or print) and described as hypersensitive to the rhetorical situation and materiality. This definition emphasizes both the process of composition and the final product.</td>
<td>Combine, blend, multi, or integrate, mode</td>
<td>“The discussion of visual rhetoric has helped us envision new possibilities for composing in new media. An ongoing discussion of aural rhetoric may allow us to hear new possibilities as well.” (Kitchens, 2006, p. 333)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media breaks from print-traditions</td>
<td>New media texts rely on remediation and the re-working of previous literate practices through a clear break/shift away from established print traditions. New hardware is required to create new media (computers, CPUs, projectors, cameras).</td>
<td>Linearity, movement, shift, remediate, transforms, progresses</td>
<td>“new media … break away from print traditions” (Ball, 2004, p. 403)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is crucial for the development of the discipline</td>
<td>New media is a fitting topic for both scholarship and classrooms. The rhetoric and composition community is emphasized along with suggestions for faculty professional development. New media is a challenge to classroom structures.</td>
<td>Faculty, classroom, curriculum, assessment</td>
<td>“We have long taught new media technologies … in our classrooms.” (DeVoss &amp; Grabill, 2005, p.28)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is a concept originating in other disciplines</td>
<td>Authors do not craft a definition, but offer another scholar’s definition from a separate discipline to define new media.</td>
<td>Quotations, paraphrases</td>
<td>“In The Language of New Media, [Manovich] identified…” (McKee, 2006, p. 338)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is interactive</td>
<td>Audience participation or interaction is a defining mode and characteristic of new media and the new media rhetorical situation.</td>
<td>Audience, interaction, participation</td>
<td>“New media culture is less resonant with interpretation than with engagement” (Rickert &amp; Salvo, 2006, p. 296)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six definitional categories

*New media is digital* is the most frequent type of definition rhetoric and composition scholars put forth, occurring 27% of the time (18 definitions). Definitions identified with the concept code *new media is digital* emphasize texts created in a digital environment, using digital technologies, and intended for digital distribution. This type of definition works on several levels. First, definitions in the category of *new media is digital* equate “new media” with digital composition and digital environments, either by
specifically linking the word “digital” with “new media” or by linking “new media” with digital writing technologies including: software, hypertext, on- and off-line programs. For example, Sorapure (2006a) describes software like Adobe Flash as shaping the creation of “new media.” She goes so far as to describe the link between “new media” and Flash as crucial when she describes Flash as the ultimate new media design program, arguing that for some, Flash “has come to represent new media in general” (p. 413). The argument that new media is digital is so frequent that scholars often conflate the term digital composing with “new media,” even to the point of using the phrases as synonymous. For example, Anderson (2003) consistently pairs the terms “new media” with “digital texts,” and Brooks and Mara (2007) group the phrases “digital communication” and “new media” 7 out of 22 times—32% of the time—on the first page of their article alone, demonstrating the conflation of these two terms. Gillette (2005) says, “When the web first became popular, I taught my new media courses (then called hypertext courses) through the lens of classical rhetoric” (n.p.). Here, Gillette demonstrates the clear connections between digital composing with “new media” by identifying “new media” with a specific type of digital composition (hypertext).

Other scholars who argue new media is digital suggest “new media” is integrally tied to computer systems, languages, and networks. Amerika and Weight (in Miles, et. al., 2003), for example, both equate “new media” with computerized information systems. Amerika writes “us people/dudes/pretty ladies (cyborgs all) have been writing code into interactive states of being, which allows us to behave in a society of networked consciousness” when he defines “new media” (n.p.). With this definition, Amerika argues
that “new media” has to do with how digital writing technologies have become part of Western society. Weight says, “I’m trying to find a way of talking about new media that acknowledges its epistemological, structural, and ontological parameters. Talking about hypertext does this to an extent” (n.p.). She implicitly argues “new media” and the digital nature of hypertexting are related—and almost synonymous. That “new media” and hypertext are related presents an argument linking “new media” to digital writing and interactions. Weight identifies a digital consciousness as an underlying element of “new media,” strategically placing “new media” within conversations of contemporary writing technologies as well as those of the future. Sorapure (2006a), too, aligns “new media” with digital concerns, arguing, “new media composing, the process composing, the process and the final product are closely shaped by what the software can do and be the writer’s ability to access the particular features and functions of the software” (p. 413). Crafting new media texts, her argument suggests, is impossible without using certain software, such as Flash. Sorapure’s argument also maneuvers “new media” discussions into the realm of computers and writing. Not all authors who argue new media is digital want to be as restrictive, though. While Gillette (2005) demonstrates the slippery reduction and conflation often associated with arguing new media is digital, McKee (2006) demonstrates a less reductive essential connection between digital composing and “new media” by describing new media’s reliance on “computerized writing technologies” (p. 338) rather than pointing out specific types of computer networking.

When authors argue new media is multimodal, they emphasize the use of multiple modes over any digital activity that may be suggested. These definitions also occur in
27% of definitions (18), suggesting that both new media is digital and new media is multimodal are of the most common types of definitions, and arguably, because they are the arguments about “new media” that scholars are most willing to take up, the most important. Scholars whose definitions draw on concepts of multimodality may consider new media digital, or they may consider new media non-digital: the emphasis does not rest on digitality but on the combination of modes. In other words, scholars might describe new media as being both multimodal and digital; however, they consistently emphasize one of these characteristics over the other, arguing that it is the more defining characteristic. Definitions identified as new media is multimodal focus on incorporating modes of writing, including sound, visual, video, color, and layout/design. For example, Kitchens (2006) suggests, “the discussion of visual rhetoric has helped us envision new possibilities for composing in new media. An ongoing discussion of aural rhetoric may allow us to hear new possibilities as well” (p. 333). Here, Kitchens emphasizes including modalities—such as aural and visual rhetoric. However, when it comes to aural rhetoric particularly, the production and distribution of such rhetoric is assumed to be digital (magnetic tape from audiocassettes, for example, is hard to find and even more difficult to integrate with other modes). The use of such modes might happen in a digital environment, but scholars still place the importance on the modes themselves rather than the digital nature of the composition.

Definitions suggesting the argument that new media is multimodal describe new media texts as a combination of modes—whether that combination is physical or digital. For example, Shipka (2009) suggests a new media text “attends to a much broader range
of texts, technologies, and rhetorical activities—those informing the production and reception of print-based, linear essays, objects-texts, live performances, as well as digital texts” (p. 347). On the other hand, Austen (2010) suggests opportunities for “new media” as “multimodal writing that could bring together the visual and oral natures of language” while being digital. In both Shipka’s (2009) and Austen’s (2010) definitions, the combination of modes is the prevalent feature of “new media”; Shipka (2009) further suggests the emphasis should be on modalities, not digitality, when she says her assessment framework “does not focus exclusively on the production and evaluation of digital new media texts but attends to a much broader range of texts, technologies and rhetorical activities” (p. 347). Whether “new media” is understood as physical or digital, the combination and variety of modes utilized sets new media texts apart as multimodal.

Finally, new media is multimodal definitions emphasize both the process of composition and the final product of composing with multiple modes or media. Sorapure (2006), for example, suggests that teachers focus “on the effectiveness with which modes such as image, text, and sound are brought together” (n.p.). Often, definitions use terms such as combine, mix and match, or integrate; for example, Halbritter (2006) states, “I prefer the term integrated” because it “calls our attention [to] the individual modes and senses being addressed by multimodal and multisensory media” (p. 318). Alexander (2008) writes that students who write “new media” are “‘mixing and matching’ media to produce complex” texts (p. 2). For both Halbritter (2006) and Alexander (2008), the use of multiple modes comes to fruition in “new media” where an end product draws on the rhetorical contributions of each mode to craft an overarching argument. The strategic
maneuvering here, then, resides on understanding different modes’ holistic rhetorical import for texts. Rhetoric and composition scholars emphasize multimodality over the digital aspects of “new media” when they suggest *new media is multimodal*.

Scholars who argue *new media is multimodal* echo beliefs also described outside of the data set. A foundational text about “new media” in rhetoric and composition is the book, *Writing New Media* by Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, and Sirc (2004). In the text, Wysocki claims,

we should call ‘new media texts’ those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers and readers—doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody. […] Under this definition, *new media texts do not have to be digital.* (p. 15, emphasis added)

In her statement, Wysocki explains the need for understanding multimodal composing, but she is adamant that new media texts do not have to be digital. The divide between definitions that equate “new media” with digital composing and those equating it with multimodality may overlap at times, but these arguments have different emphases and core components, showcasing the lack of consensus rhetoric and composition as a community has in regards to definitions of “new media.” When scholars argue *new media is multimodal* but non-digital, their arguments move away from traditional scholarly conversations that incorporate “new media” (as presented in Chapter 4). Wysocki and
Shipka (2009), for example—and even Rice (2007) who writes, “I wanted to explore new media writing without being limited to only computer-based composing” (p. 299)—are all trying to break “new media” from ties to digitality and scholarly conversations about contemporary writing technologies and digital texts. Their definitions are rhetorical and argumentative (Schiappa, 2003; Zarefsky, 2006), suggesting rhetoric and composition’s contemporary avatar is one that reconsiders the rhetorical underpinnings and traditions of composition studies even as current understandings of composing shifts. In some ways, these scholars attempt to shift the field away from technology and closer to previous models of writing—models that might rely on graphite, ink, paper, and scissors.

These two categories—new media is digital (27% or 18 definitions) and new media is multimodal (27% or 18 definitions)—together account for 54% of definitions (36). These two categories are exclusive; a definition of “new media” can only be one or the other, as scholars always emphasize one characteristic over another when defining “new media.” Although they are exclusive, these two definitional categories are closely related. For example, emphasizing the digital nature of “new media,” Grigar (2005b) says, “we have long taught new media technologies like ‘websites, virtual worlds, virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, computer animations, digital video, and human-computer interfaces’ [Manovich, 2001, pp. 8-9] in our classrooms” (p. 376). Although many of these technologies rely on multimodality to function, Grigar emphasizes the digital aspects. Definitions suggesting new media is digital and those arguing new media is multimodal each account for 27% of definitions. Because scholars make these two rhetorical arguments about “new media” more frequently than other arguments, these
Scholars are most interested in situating their work in terms of new modes of composing. Scholars are making a strategic maneuver to bring the field into a contemporary paradigm: one that relies on more than print-linguistics. Instead of relying strictly on print-linguistics, scholars argue *new media is digital* and *new media is multimodal* in order to contextualize their own arguments around current trends and understandings of what composing means during this ten-year time period (which is a larger discussion scholars engage in, as noted in Chapter 4, and “composing,” like “new media,” has no fixed definition). The attention scholars pay to concepts of digitality and multimodality in their definitions of “new media” demonstrates what subfields and scholarly discussions are most frequently interested in “new media” (as will be further addressed in Chapter 6). Scholars’ interests coalesce around discussions about writing technologies and new understandings of what it means to write and compose. These definitions are strategic maneuvers that help scholars situate their discussions of “new media” squarely in the computers and writing subfield, targeting a particular audience of peers.

Although *new media is digital* and *new media is multimodal* account for a relatively high percentage of definitions, scholars do present other arguments via their definitions. *New media breaks from print traditions* is a definitional argument occurring in 23% of definitions (16 definitions). This relatively high percentage suggests scholars are interested in implications of what writing looks like in a contemporary society. In these definitions, “new media” is not just the next step in composing; instead, it is a clear, distinct shift away from text and linear composition, and “new media” is often tied to remediation. For example, Ball (2004) points out, “new media texts […] break away from
print traditions so that written text is not the primary rhetorical means” (p. 403). Ball further argues, “applying the term new media scholarship to digital texts that use print-based conventions is an inappropriate application of the term” (p. 403). Such definitions are strategic arguments pushing other scholars towards including a more diverse array of texts in their understandings of “new media”—such arguments further push scholars beyond their comfort zones (which might include relying on traditions such as the linear progression of a text). These arguments suggest a new type of writing, one that may be very unfamiliar to scholars; therefore, the break from print traditions must be emphasized to help audiences envision “new media” texts. Additionally, Stroupe (2007) presents an image/screen versus print/page dichotomy when he describes “irreconcilable differences in the writing/reading environments of print as opposed to New Media,” echoing some of the concerns Ball has (Stroupe, 2007, p. 421). Such a dichotomy helps readers more clearly understand and conceptualize what a break from print traditions means.

Scholars emphasizing new media’s break from print traditions do so in order to redefine what it means to write in the 2000s. Scholars define “new media” as a break to highlight the importance of new media research and its role in shaping the future of writing—both for the university and for nonacademic settings. Conceptually suggesting new media’s break from print traditions—especially as the next stage in a progression of writing technologies—is a prominent strategic maneuver, capturing the disciplinary evolution of composing technologies. When scholars discuss new media as a break from print, they assume other scholars recognize “new media’s” status as a type of composition that developed after other types of texts through a continuum of composing
technologies (stylus, printing press, typewriter, computer, Web 2.0; see Gitelman, 2006). For example, Schauf (2001) understands “new media” to be the culmination of a series of events over time whereby “photography supersedes drawing, film supersedes photography, video supersedes film, and new media supersedes video” (p. 35). Here, the break from previous texts is evoked as a way to remind the community of how they discuss “new media.” Grigar (2007) also describes the role developing composing technologies play in “new media,” claiming “new media” has to do with:

what it means to be human in an age when communication among the world’s population is occurring via satellites and broadband technologies instead of face-to-face interactions and our ideas and art instantiated in pixels instead of as expressions captured in print or on canvas. (p. 214)

Grigar emphasizes “new media’s” position in an historical continuum of composing technologies that the discipline frequently discusses.

While “new media” may not be composed of anything really new (remember, even arguing new media is multimodal requires texts to draw on familiar modes such as the audio and visual, which have a longer history than writing itself), it is a type of composition relying on remediation and the re-working of previous literate practices to develop new types of writing within and for new writing environments. Definitions suggesting new media breaks from print traditions also demonstrate a clear break or shift away from established print traditions (especially print-linguistic and linear literacy constructions). Authors who suggest “new media” is a part of such a break suggests that new media texts move understandings of composition away from and beyond previous
types of writing (essays and linear text, for example). The new hardware required to
create such texts (computers, CPUs, projectors, cameras) is also emphasized,
demonstrating shifts in creative mediums over the past ten years. Grigar (2005b) writes of
“new media” being produced using “an electronic” medium (not simply digital),
including “all technologies utilized in production of the work in the medium” (p. 390).
Available composing technologies, then, influence and enable a break from print
traditions. Here, too, scholars’ arguments are strategically aligned with discussions of
composing technologies and their effects on composition(s).

Rhetoric and composition scholars writing during this ten-year span are almost as
interested in arguing new media breaks from print traditions (23%) as they are in arguing
new media is digital (27%) or new media is multimodal (27%), suggesting new media
breaks from print traditions is a significant scholarly maneuver. A movement away from
traditional modes of writing and composing means significant shifts for the field of
rhetoric and composition overall, perhaps even preparing the discipline for a major
paradigm shift. Rhetoric and compositionists who argue new media breaks from print
traditions move the field toward a paradigm shift as they argue for paying more attention
to new understandings of writing.

When authors define “new media” in terms of the work (teaching and scholarship)
of rhetoric and composition scholars, they define new media as crucial for the
development of the discipline. They suggest that “new media” is a fitting topic for both
scholarship and a classroom curriculum, and they emphasize the practices of the rhetoric
and composition community while suggesting opportunities for faculty professional
development. These definitions are clearly focused on how the discipline utilizes “new media”—and why it should. Scholars whose definitions are situated within this category are concerned particularly with “new media’s” role in the development of the discipline, both its scholarship and pedagogy. DeVoss and Grabill (2005) poignantly describe the heart of this concept when they write, “The types of issues commonplace to new media writing spaces […] are our discipline’s attempts to negotiate, adopt, and script writing with multiple media into its practices” (p. 28). “New media,” then, is changing the face of rhetoric and composition studies, becoming more prevalent in the work of the field.

Authors arguing “new media’s” importance to the field also describe “new media” as a challenge to classroom structures, characterized as presenting a pedagogical dilemma concerned with implementation or assessment rather than discussing specific activities or assignment. The classroom becomes an important site of “new media” compositions. Sorapure (2006) suggests, “Discussions of new media assessment should therefore help us articulate why new media matters and should help us in establishing, for ourselves and for our students, the key continuities and differences between composing in print and composing in new media” (n.p.). As students are asked to engage in contemporary forms of composing, scholars writing about the importance of “new media” to the discipline’s development emphasize “new media’s” position in composition classrooms and the necessity of speaking about “new media” as a constructive part of such classes. Only 12% of definitions (8) are arguments for more fully incorporating “new media” into the scholarly and pedagogical work of the field; this low percentage suggests very few scholars are interested in incorporating “new media”
into the work of the discipline itself during this ten-year time period. However, that there is any discussion of “new media’s” importance to the discipline’s development—and that such discussions have been published—underscores its importance. Clearly, “new media” is integral to the field’s growth, and a few voices have spoken out about it—still more have spoken out about “new media” in general. More work outlining the specific role of “new media” in rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development is needed.

One of the least frequently used definitional arguments is that *new media is a concept originating in other disciplines*, which only occurs in 7% of definitions (5 definitions in the data corpus). Scholars who view new media as an outsider concept use quotations and paraphrases of other authors’ definitions in order to define and discuss “new media.” Such authors especially rely on scholars from disciplines outside of rhetoric and composition, such as communications and media studies. The most commonly referenced definition of “new media” is that of Manovich (2001) in The Language of New Media. Manovich’s text was published in 2001, and most scholars citing the text are published after 2002, suggesting that his definition has been incorporated into the discipline’s scholarship early in the past decade. Although his work is cited in numerous articles, scholars in the data set only invoke his definition in four

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30 Reviewing published scholarship throughout a more extensive time period may show a stronger interest in convincing other scholars that “new media” should be understood as a relevant textual production for the field.
31 Manovich (2001) is referred to in 4 out of 5 definitions.
32 Manovich is cited in some articles but not specifically discussed. For example, authors might include a citation in a long list of citations at the end of a sentence indicating Manovich’s text as one supporting their argument. This is not a movement to draw on Manovich’s definition of new media or to suggest it is the definition of new media.
definitions as the primary definition of “new media.” Gillette (2005) cites Manovich’s work, as does McKee (2006) and Sorapure (2006) while Anderson (2008) cites Mackey (2002). Using definitions from outside of the discipline suggests several alternative ways scholars in rhetoric and composition could understand, define, and discuss “new media.” Scholars who quote outsider definitions add nuance to their own discussions, drawing on definitions from other disciplines suggests rhetoric and composition scholars enhance their work by looking to other discourse communities for fresh ideas and discussions.

The fact that only 7% of definitions draw on outside definitions of “new media” is promising, and, in fact, encouraging. With so few scholars drawing on definitions of “new media” from outside of the field, other rhetoric and composition scholars who define new media are comfortable building their own theories and definitions of “new media.” Rhetoric and compositionists do not feel they must rely on others’ definitions, which allows scholars to put forth theories about and definitions of “new media” more freely within their scholarship. Rhetoric and compositionists who do not utilize scholars’ definitions from outside the field make rhetorical moves to situate “new media” squarely within the purview of rhetoric and composition. Instead of being a borrowed term, “new media” becomes a part of rhetoric and composition. If rhetoric and composition scholars define the term so that “new media” fits distinctly into their areas of expertise—rhetoric and composition and computers and writing—then other scholars in the field will also accept “new media’s” position in the discipline’s scholarly conversations and pedagogical work.

Arguing that new media is interactive (4% of the data set or 3 definitions) is a
rhetorical move denoting “new media” as a process or product with emphasized audience participation and interactivity. When scholars rhetorically argue through definitions that *new media is interactive*, they suggest audiences play an integral, physical role in the development of a text, as do Rickert and Salvo (2006) when they write, “new media culture is less resonant with interpretation than with engagement” (p. 296). Rickert and Salvo, as well as other scholars contributing to this definitional category, argue that for new media texts, the audience is the central component of the rhetorical situation.

Although composers of any text are (theoretically) always sensitive to the needs and perceptions of their audiences, composers who craft new media texts are hyper-aware of their audiences because they rely on audience participation to complete the new media text. For example, Grigar (2005a) suggests new media texts are those texts “where the audience must participate physically in the delivery of the text” (p. 105). Rickert and Salvo (2006) further suggest, as noted earlier, “new media” has a strong relationship to audience engagement (p. 296). Audience participation, for these scholars, might mean readers use provided software to digitally paint a picture or link two symbols on a screen in order to produce a new image or move the text in a new direction, even bringing new text or images onto the screen. Expecting audiences to participate to this degree is quite different than the expectations other composers have for their readers. Composers of print-linguistic texts, for example, even simple webtexts, might ask a reader to interact with the text by thinking critically and taking notes, not by clicking multiple interrelated hyperlinks or adding a recording of her voice to the document.

Only 4% of definitions (3 definitions) rely on the argument that *new media is*
interactive, demonstrating that not many scholars are interested in making this type of maneuver. This could be because other scholars assume interactivity as an element of digital texts (clicking from page to page, for example, or entering data into a social networking site, even moving through the levels of a videogame all incorporate a degree of interactivity, although scholars do not particularly reference this fact in their definitions of “new media”). Overall, scholars are not interested in making this rhetorical move, indicating that interactivity is either assumed or scholars do not find interactivity integral for definitions of “new media.”

Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitional Category (Conceptual Code)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New media is digital</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is multimodal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is interactive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media breaks from print traditions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is crucial for disciplinary development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media is a concept originating in other disciplines</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of theories

As noted in table 9 (above), the definitional categories indicate overarching types of definitional theories. Scholars often use definitions for two rhetorical purposes: they define “new media” from a practical standpoint, describing the what of “new media” as well as the uses (both academic and nonacademic) (58% of definitions or 39 definitions), or they define “new media” from a conceptual standpoint, describing the underlying theories of new media (42% of definitions or 29 definitions).
Comparing the different types of definitions is also useful for understanding the work of the discipline in terms of theory and practice. The majority of definitions are concerned with practical uses of “new media”; definitions might explain how to use new media, different aspects or attributes of new media, or what new media means when rhetoric and compositionists talk with colleagues from across campus. Fewer definitions are concerned with theoretical underpinnings relating to new media’s position in rhetoric and composition. The fact that scholarship in the field includes more definitions about how scholars use “new media,” and the fact that such definitions are so diverse and often contradictory, might point to a need for more theoretical discussions or the need to examine rhetoric and composition scholarship for definitions of new media published before 2000.\(^3^3\)

For example, as noted above, some scholars like Shipka (2009) claim that multimodality makes a text “new media,” and digital production or distribution has nothing to do with it. Other scholars such as Sorapure (2006) are adamant that “new media” must be digital. Still other scholars such as Ball (2005) claim “new media” is multimodal and digital, but it cannot look anything like a text on the page (instead, it is a break from print traditions). For Ball, “new media” has to draw on the affordances of non-linear digital technologies like hypertexting and embedding video. This spectrum of definitions does not provide a cohesive understanding of what “new media” actually is.\(^3^4\)

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\(^3^3\) As Gitelman (2006) notes, new media is not a new term; it has been used popularly for at least 60 years. However, “new media” has not been used by the discipline substantially before the 2000s. Further study might examine if any definitions of “new media” do exist in rhetoric and composition scholarship before 2000.

\(^3^4\) This is a recurring problem in rhetoric and composition scholarship. Many crucial aspects of the discipline do not have cohesive definitions. For example, as shown in Chapter 4, debates about what counts
They do suggest a productive blurriness, indicating fluid, ever-contextual practice-driven definitions. These definitions put forth arguments about how scholars and teachers use “new media” and explain it to others.

When scholars define “new media” by exploring its conceptual details, they most frequently do so when describing *new media as a break from print traditions*. Defining “new media” as a break from print traditions underpins several practice-driven theories: *new media is digital*, *new media is multimodal*, and *new media is interactive*. Scholars such as Shipka (2009) define “new media” in ways that clearly demonstrate a break from print traditions. Shipka defines “new media” through her own framework that:

- does not focus exclusively on the production and evaluation of digital (new media) texts but attends to a much broader range of texts, technologies, and rhetorical activities—those informing the production and reception of print-based, linear essays, objects-texts, live performances, as well as digital texts. (p. W347)

Further, she provides an example: Shipka describes a “Lost and Found” project as a new media text that “requires students to collect and analyze an assortment of found texts and to create both a context and an audience for which the texts assume meaning when viewed in relation to one another” (p. W350). Here, a break from print-traditions is described, but the emphasis Shipka writes on is a multimodal one.

Arguing that “new media” constitutes a break from print traditions is the conceptual underpinning allowing rhetoric and compositionists to describe “new media” as multimodal in nature, but it also goes further. This definitional argument allows

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as “writing” or “composition” are ever-present in the discipline. However, some scholarship about crucial concepts is more cohesive than others, such as what counts as a composing technology.
scholars such as Wysocki (2004) to argue new media texts are produced in a way suggesting a particular degree of rhetorical savvy, where the form of the text is more prominently featured as a rhetorical device (unlike the transparency with which audiences might view mediums for communication). Wysocki suggests composers construct the medium as an integral component of the argument presented, suggesting both a shift away from print traditions and the end products of such a shift. The end products are quite different from anything that could be considered print/text, although some digital compositions still rely partially on print-linguistics, as Ball argues (2004).

The difference between a practice-driven and a concept-driven theory also depends on strategic maneuvering. In examining the definitional trends, scholars in the field are more interested in practice-driven theories—examining the types of new media texts people can produce and how—than with concept-driven theories—questions about why we should develop them or what the value of such texts is for a field largely rooted in textual practices (as rhetoric and composition has been throughout the contemporary American university’s history). This strategic maneuvering positions the interests of the computers and writing community more squarely in the realm of textual production than of disciplinary or professional goals. While scholars who work with practice-driven theories strive to move the field toward a more enhanced understanding of contemporary composition, they do so at the expense of theories aimed at foundational knowledge in the discipline.

Questions concerning the value of “new media” for the discipline, especially in terms of faculty relations, university politics, and classroom practices and management,
are crucial. Drawing on definitions that are concept-driven theories positions the field to answer critical questions for maintaining a presence on campus. “New media” is a contemporary means of composing, but it is a means of composing that rhetoric and composition is working to claim, as evidenced by the six types of strategic definitions scholars in the field employ. Scholars defining “new media” via practice-driven theories forego the much-needed step of explaining how “new media” fits into the research questions and objects of the discipline, assuming rhetoric and composition’s “obvious” connection to such new texts. Scholars who present arguments of “new media” via concept-driven theories strategically maneuver rhetoric and composition into the 21st century by making new types of texts the purview of the discipline.

As noted above, scholars’ definitions of “new media” offer practice-driven theories 58% of the time concept-driven theories 42% of the time. Because practice-driven theories are those with underlying assumptions about “new media’s” implicit position within rhetoric and composition, scholars are more likely to assume their audiences acknowledge new media texts as acceptable objects of study and production. Scholars are more likely to assume new media texts and new media technologies are already a part of the discipline. Fewer arguments about concept-driven theories and the necessity of bringing “new media” into the purview of rhetoric and composition suggests these arguments are not yet as integral in the discipline’s development. However, having fewer discussions of “new media’s” position in disciplinary formation and foundational knowledge is problematic. Without concept-driven theories, there is no common language in regards to “new media”: the field’s discussions remain imprecise, leaving the
field vulnerable from the inside. Without a common language and understanding of “new media’s” position within rhetoric and composition—with only assumptions about its positions and discussions of its textual properties—the field is open to insider and outsider critique. Outsiders may be scholars in fields with similar areas of study (such as communications studies), areas of study with more new media experience and expertise (media studies, art, film, communications studies), or administrators with power over the department. Such outsiders can challenge the work of rhetoric and composition across campuses; they can even stifle the field’s development by stopping rhetoric and composition scholars from teaching new media theory and production in their classrooms, both undergraduate and graduate. Without concept-driven theories, the future of the discipline in regards to “new media” is on shaky ground.

Conclusions and Implications

Although a fixed, stable definition for “new media” would grow stagnant quickly and limit the discipline’s development, rhetoric and compositions’ teachers and scholars must think critically about how and why they use specific terms, such as “new media,” because their uses of such terms play a role in how the discipline develops. The line between terms such as multimodality, digital composition, and new media is still blurred. In some cases, the blurring is beneficial, helping scholars explore closely related areas in their scholarship and teaching, adding variety and nuance to exciting areas of study. As composing technologies evolve, new media—and its definitions—will continue to evolve. Without explicit, contextualized definitions of “new media,” rhetoric and composition scholars are frequently discussing different things when they are under the
impression they are discussing the same thing. The discipline’s cohesion is distorted by these contradictory definitions, making it difficult to continue scholarly momentum because there is no common foundation upon which to build. When some scholars confuse “new media” with digital composing, others insist it is not digital in the least, and still more insist “new media” must include a large degree of audience interaction and participation, discussions about “new media” will continue to be broad and potentially confusing.

Additionally, multiple categories of definitions demonstrate the presentation of multiple arguments about a key term. Multiple arguments serve as different venues of strategic maneuvering, which position rhetoric and composition differently within institutional contexts (departments, universities, and professional organizations and affiliations). Relying on different types of arguments moves the field into different positions, for example, moving rhetoric and composition away from English departments and closer to communications or media studies departments, where print, speech, the visual, and the digital often come together. While building stronger relationships with closely related fields and departments such as communications and media studies would certainly situate the field to be defined and develop in certain ways, it is not necessary for the field’s growth. Because so many definitions of “new media” have been presented, rhetoric and composition could benefit from spending more time developing more substantive, consistent definitions and arguing more powerfully for “new media’s” incorporation into the field. Many of scholars’ “new media” definitions can be explained by more rigorous conceptual theorizing of “new media” and by paying more attention to
concept-driven arguments that new media is a break from print traditions. I propose new media is best understood as a theory of writing that is a contextual, meaningful break from print traditions situated within a particular social moment.

In the next chapter, I explain how the analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5 describe rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary development. I explain “new media’s” history within rhetoric and composition to draw conclusions about how the discipline develops as well as how concepts impact the growth of rhetoric and composition and have the potential to change the discipline’s paths.
Chapter 6

New Media’s Position in Rhetoric and Composition’s Development from 2000-2010

Grigar (2007) opens her “What New Media Offers” with an anecdote: “a new member of the group asked what new media offers rhetoric. ‘Why,’ this person queried, ‘do rhetoricians pursue new media? Isn’t rhetoric essentially a word-centered discipline?’” (p. 214). Grigar’s answer to this question was first, to craft a course around the question to explore it in more detail, and second, to claim, “from the standpoint of postmodern, postcolonial, transdisciplinary thinking, [the answer is] a new way of seeing, a new way of defining, a new way of knowing—of loving text” (p. 216). Throughout this project, I have shown that new media does afford rhetoric and composition scholars a new way of defining and knowing text. Through new media texts, scholars in the field have the chance to identify, examine, and understand contemporary genres of text. Critically examining discussions of “new media” in rhetoric and composition scholarship exposes the ways scholars in the field prioritize composing frameworks and the contextual applications of such composing frameworks. By identifying and understanding the field’s approaches to textual productions, scholars in the field can better understand the field’s purpose and development as well as their work and the future work they may engage in when designing research studies, publishing scholarship, and teaching composition to first-year and upper class students. In scholarly discussions of new media, rhetoric and compositionists discuss the composing frameworks of the field, and
recognizing that current scholarship addresses an understanding of composing frameworks illustrates the field’s focus on how and why we use technologies to compose.

Perhaps because of the opportunities new media texts give rhetoric and composition scholars, new media has been increasingly prevalent in our scholarship. The 2012 *Conference on College Composition and Communication* alone has 115 sessions out of 477 sessions (25%) identified with the key term “new media.” Along with the growing prevalence of new media in our scholarship comes a need to more thoroughly understand new media (as described in earlier chapters). Birr Moje (2009) calls for “an archaeological expedition to excavate and explicate several necessary distinctions in the study of new and multiple media and literacies” (p. 349). She acknowledges the lack of a consensus in regards to these key terms and suggests scholars begin to determine just what the distinctions are. Throughout this project, I have attempted to expand on Grigar’s discussion of why new media is important to rhetoric and composition—what new media offers the discipline—and I have attempted to begin the excavation Birr Moje describes as necessary.

I have described the historical antecedents of new media in rhetoric and composition through the types of conversations scholars engage in across journals. I have also critically examined rhetoric and composition scholars’ definitions of new media. In Chapters 4 and 5, I revealed that current understandings of new media are tied to concepts of multimodality and digital composition more so than any other concepts in the field. I argue this heavy reliance on multimodality and digital composition suggests

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35 A search of “new media” on the 2012 *CCCC* searchable program returns 115 sessions.
rhetoric and composition scholars associate new media with two prevalent means of composing in the contemporary field. Relying on two specific concepts that are sometimes at odds with one another allows for contestations of what actually makes new media new, a problem Gitelman (2006) takes up in *Always Already New*.

My study suggests there is a disconnect in our disciplinary knowledge. Although my previous analyses show new media’s relationship to digital composition and multimodality, they also show some unexpected results: that including new media studies within the field makes the discipline more relevant to the technologically-saturated Western society—both academic and nonacademic—and that new media has not been rigorously theorized by the discipline (as only 42% of new media definitions speak to the concept-driven theories underlying new media). What these analyses also show is a moment of friction in regards to the discipline’s “current avatar” (Connors, 1997, p. 17): scholars have yet to come to a consensus in determining if new media has an exclusive set of identifying components. Most of the arenas where new media is discussed within rhetoric and composition fall under the purview of a subfield (computers and writing), as very little is published about new media in two of the field’s umbrella journals (*CCC* and *RTE*). While *CCC* and *RTE* publish articles mostly about pedagogy and classroom studies, these studies are of a broad nature, spanning various subfields of the discipline.

This final chapter synthesizes earlier analyses and conclusions, constructing a broad image of new media’s position in rhetoric and composition. After describing what analyses of scholarly conversations including new media and definitions of new media mean for the field of rhetoric and composition, I examine the contributions this
study makes for the field at large, what future research this project situates scholars to begin, and the current study’s limitations.

**Argument positions within scholarly conversations**

In Chapter 1, I situated this study among historical research examining both objects and concepts developing over time, contributing to the development of rhetoric and composition studies as a discipline. I further suggested the importance of six key terms as concepts that ground the study and demonstrate the need to further examine “new media” from rhetoric and composition scholars’ perspectives. Chapter 2 contributes to my methodological discussions by reviewing historiographic research methods in rhetoric and composition and presents my perspective that RAD research methods can be utilized in rhetoric and composition’s historical inquiries. Throughout Chapter 2, I argue rhetoric and composition scholars have rarely described their methods in detail, but new trends in the field’s published scholarship suggest historical studies should be presented in contemporary publications with more thorough discussions of the research methods employed. Moving from these assertions, Chapter 3 detailed the research methods I utilized to study “new media” within published scholarship in the field.

In Chapter 4, I argued scholars in rhetoric and composition take up new media in scholarly conversations about six distinct topics: *digital texts, composing technologies, foundational knowledge, community and literacy, issues about/defining modern and traditional concepts of composing, classroom contexts, and institutional contexts*. These six focused categories of scholarly conversations contribute to three overarching conversations: *composing in contemporary society, composing in the university, and*
composing in the discipline. In Chapter 5, I examined the definitions rhetoric and composition scholars use and the arguments they make about new media. Scholars argue new media is digital, new media is multimodal, new media is interactive, new media breaks from print traditions, new media is a concept originating in other disciplines, or new media is a necessary concept for disciplinary and professional development. From these analyses, I argue that discussions of new media are a part of certain scholarly conversations developing in the field’s literature. Scholars contribute to these same conversations as they present arguments about new media via defining the term.

Some definitions contribute to conversations about composing in contemporary society. For example, when scholars argue new media is digital, their arguments focus on digital texts and composing technologies, making such arguments integral to discussions of composing in contemporary society. Composing in contemporary society is a type of conversation populated with articles about digital texts, composing technologies, foundational knowledge, and issues of community literacies. Therefore, arguments connecting new media to digital composition are situated within the overarching conversation of composing in contemporary society. That new media breaks from print traditions is also an argument scholars make within discussions of composing contemporary society. Such arguments are tied to contemporary discussions and the ten-year span of this study. Before the advent of digital writing technologies, texts that break from print-traditions would not be a part of rhetoric and composition’s purview (Gitelman, 2006).
Similarly, when scholars argue *new media is multimodal*, they engage in discussions about *composing in the discipline*. Arguments about new media and multimodality cut to the heart of this conversational category. When scholars argue about new media’s multimodal nature, they bring up issues about what it means *to write* and *to compose*. Multimodality—and new media, when it is defined as multimodal—is a concept challenging traditional notions of what it means to write. Multimodality is a key word associated with *composing in the discipline* because as scholars argue for the inclusion of multiple modes of writing, they work to (re)define “composition.” Arguments that *new media is interactive* are also a part of scholarly conversations *composing in the discipline*. Interactivity is another key word used to suggest what counts as composition. Additionally, arguing that *new media is interactive* ties definitions of writing more closely to rhetorical principles, where the audience is key (Aristotle, 2006; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991).

When scholars make arguments about new media *originating in other disciplines* or being *necessary for disciplinary and professional development*, their arguments are part of discussions about *composing in the university*. These arguments are institutional arguments: they examine the activities that sustain a discipline (in terms of scholarship, teaching, and relationships with other disciplines). When scholars argue *new media is a necessary concept for disciplinary and professional development*, they call to account the status of the discipline, what it means to be a member and scholar of the disciplinary community, and what it means to teach rhetoric and composition in the university. When scholars argue *new media is a concept originating in other disciplines*, they refer to
rhetoric and composition’s relationships with other disciplines (especially communications, media, art, and film studies), drawing on those relationships to bolster rhetoric and composition as a distinct field of study. Because disciplines exist partially due to outsider recognition (as described in Chapter 1), arguments about new media can bolster interdisciplinary relationships, solidifying rhetoric and composition’s status as a discipline.

Most of these arguments about new media are part of conversations largely held in the computers and writing subfield. Discussions of new media, therefore, are a part of the subfield more than they are a part of the overarching discipline, suggesting new media is not a defining characteristic of the discipline. New media is a buzzword, and a buzz-concept with growing import, but the field overall is not fully invested in new media theory or composition. Many of the articles reviewed come from C & C or Kairos. Because I did not limit my data corpus to these journals, the fact that so many discussions

![Figure 2: Distribution of data set articles across the four journals](image)
of new media come out of C & C or Kairos (from the data set of 70 articles, 23 are from C & C, 21 are from Kairos, 16 are from CCC, and 4 are from RTE) demonstrates that the subfield is more interested in issues of new media than is the field at large. Figure 2 above shows how many articles in the corpus were published in each of the four journals examined.

**Contributions**

Although new media is largely the purview of a subdiscipline, this study contributes to historical accounts of the umbrella field, rhetoric and composition. As an historical study of new media within rhetoric and composition, my study contributes to the wealth of studies written on the history of the field, including broad, comprehensive histories of the field’s development in the American university system and focused, longitudinal studies of particular concepts and objects such as plagiarism or writing utensils. Although this study was not intended to be an historical study concerned with one specific subfield, the project has uncovered that new media studies is a concept more prevalent in the computers and writing more so than in the overarching field of rhetoric and composition.

For the field of rhetoric and composition studies as a whole, this study presents a framework for composing RAD (Haswell, 2005) histories where methods sections stand as epicenters (Smagorinsky, 2008) of research. L’Eplatteneir (2009) and Ramsey et al. (2010) suggest such a framework has been missing for historical inquiries in rhetoric and composition for quite some time. In addition to presenting new ways to approach historical study in rhetoric and composition, this study also suggests a way of
understanding overarching trends in the discipline and mapping the evolution of a discipline. By uncovering the archeology of a key concept in the field, this study demonstrates how a longitudinal study can be applied to trace the field’s development over time. Throughout this study, I have shown that perspectives in rhetoric and composition have shifted in the past ten years, paying attention to particular trends and engaging in a series of conversations aimed at making the field more accessible and integral to contemporary society. Rhetoric and composition scholars repeatedly redefine the field in order to fit the needs of the discipline during this time period. From 2000-2010, scholars defined new media in the field in such a way as to expand the definition of writing from traditional printed texts to multimodal compositions (both physical and digital). Further, scholars immerse themselves in scholarly conversations and situate key terms within those conversations by arguing definitions of “new media” that align with the conversations’ overarching ideas. By engaging in and contributing to particular conversations, scholars mold the field’s development. By contributing to—and choosing to contribute to—scholarly conversations about composing in society, in the university, and in the discipline, scholars shape the main concerns of the field and bring new media into the discussion. Scholars who present arguments about new media willingly align their discussions with other prevalent trends in the field. By contributing to these three categories of conversations, scholars bring new media into conversations that the field overall is invested in, inviting other scholars to accept new media under the field’s purview.
Most importantly for the development of the subfield, this study suggests new media is a crucial term, but it is a term with no common understandings of what the term implies, as is true of all concepts crucial to the field. As is the case for so many key concepts, new media is a term whose definition cannot be taken for granted. Scholars draw on a variety of definitions when referring to new media and new media texts. I have argued this lack of consensus can sometimes be productive, causing scholars to continuously engage each other and converse in more nuanced manners; other times, it can be detrimental, holding scholars back from engaging with each other more rigorously because when they draw on terms like new media, the meaning of the term may be lost on readers. Therefore, this study challenges computers and writing scholars to craft more substantial arguments about and definitions of new media, conceptually theorizing about what new media means for the subdiscipline and its position within rhetoric and composition studies.

**Limitations**

Both the discipline of rhetoric and composition and the computers and writing subfield are examined in this study, yet the study has certain limitations, as does every study. In order to fully explore new media’s growth in the discipline, a more in-depth study would be necessary. Hawisher et al. (1996) begin their study *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education* in 1979. A study seeking to fully describe all of the historical antecedents of new media might begin in 1979, as the Hawisher et al. study does. However, such a study might also explore a wider array of professional texts, including journals such as *College English* or *Rhetoric Review*. 
Professional texts such as Selber’s (2004) *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* or Lankshear and Knobel’s (2008) *New Literacies*, among others, might be reviewed as well. The present study, however, was not concerned with a broad history of new media, but rather a recent history of how scholars in rhetoric and composition have taken up the term in the past decade.

In addition to expanding the types of texts examined, this study would benefit from an extended time range. The current study only examines ten years of journal articles. Because discussions of new media are found within prominent discussions of the field, as noted in Chapter 4, examining the precursor terms of new media within these conversations over a longer period of time would uncover more about the history of new media. Such a study would expand and strengthen the conclusions of the present study, giving them more depth and perhaps even changing or shifting the results as more and more texts are incorporated into the study. The ten year study, while allowing data and discussion for analysis, does not sufficiently allow for a robust understanding of the field’s development over time in regards to contemporary writing technologies, especially those utilized to compose new media. Such a limited time frame severely restricts the conclusions I am able to draw about new media’s development in the field.

Utilizing an in-depth citation index may also enhance the study. A citation index could be used to examine scholars who have import on this particular concept. Identifying critical scholars in the field is in many ways as important as identifying critical texts, definitions, and arguments. A citation indexing would enable scholars to trace scholarly interests and relationships between scholars to understand how scholars
influence the development of disciplinary conversations and knowledge building. The present study only examines published scholarship, so although

Figure 3: Cycle of publication

![Cycle of publication diagram]

scholarly interests and published scholarship work in conjunction with each other to advance the field, this study only looks at half of the cycle. As I described in Chapter 3, scholarly interests lead scholars to engage in new research and then publish that research. Then scholars read this research, are influenced by it, and, in turn, undergo and publish their own research in a similar vein. This cycle of scholarly interest and published scholarship is represented in figure 3 above.

**Future Research**

Because this study is a discussion of how scholars in the field have described and used the term new media—how they have incorporated it into the discipline and how they situate it in the discipline’s contemporary issues—the next step is to understand how that discussion gets disseminated to members of the discipline. In addition to journals (the
purview of this dissertation), textbooks act as another record of normal science. As such, textbooks play crucial roles in disseminating knowledge about a discipline and introducing the field to potential new scholars. Textbooks are traditionally thought of as sources that collect and present the foundational knowledge of a discipline (Nelms, 1993; Connors, 1997). In order to understand new media’s full impact on the field, textbooks need to be analyzed to determine if they show trends that are similar to trends in the published scholarship. Although scholars often argue for new media’s incorporation into the composition classroom (as noted in Chapters 4 and 5), one way to know if new media is making it into the college writing classroom in significant ways is to determine whether or not new media is a component of contemporary textbooks. Therefore, further research will determine whether new media has been incorporated into textbooks and to what degree. Analyzing textbooks and scholarly publications for new media trends will enhance scholars’ understandings of how integral new media is to rhetoric and composition and the computers and writing subfield.

Another study focusing on new media, or perhaps contributing to the work this dissertation has begun, might examine oral histories. An oral histories project with interviews from prominent new media scholars in the field could contribute to an understanding of new media’s growth in the field in new ways. Additionally, collecting oral histories from prominent scholars in the discipline overall as well as novice scholars in the field could be analyzed and synthesized together with interviews from prominent scholars in new media research. By asking scholars several questions about their experiences with new media, the work begun in this dissertation can be seen from various
angles. What stories do scholars tell about how they first came upon new media and how they understand new media’s place in the field? How do those narratives compare to the published scholarship on new media as described in this dissertation? This project could contribute to the development of the subfield in much the same way Inman’s (2004) *Computers and Writing: The Cyborg Era* has contributed to community building. Such a study contributes to community building and a nuanced understanding of new media’s inclusion in the field from multiple perspectives—published scholarship and human memory, which could potentially contradict or support each other.

Because this study and these suggestions for future research focus on new media, it would also be interesting to address other issues this dissertation has brought up. For example, a longitudinal study on historical studies in rhetoric and composition would be essential for further establishing historical inquiry as RAD research (Haswell, 2005). In the 1990s, historiography was a more prevalent topic, with research conducted by many historians from Berlin to Crowley to Vitanza. In the 2000s, scholars such as L’Eplatteneir and Ramsey et al. have contributed to a renewed interested in what archives have to offer rhetoric and composition. As the field’s interest in historical studies ebbs and flows, aligning historical inquiry with more of a social scientist perspective of rhetoric and composition could highlight rhetoric and composition historical studies in different ways.

Such a study might survey numerous scholarly journals from the field—perhaps the four examined here as well as *Written Communication, College English, Rhetoric Review, TESOL Quarterly, Teaching in the Two-Year College*, and numerous recent online-only peer-reviewed journals—to examine how historical studies have been
presented to readers during different time periods. For example, contemporary rhetoric and composition historians might include methods sections, but what do they look like? What features denote historiographies in rhetoric and composition 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, even 100 years ago? What features do historians typically use in the 2010s? How will these features change by 2020? Do rhetoric and composition historiographies draw on the same features as those historiographies written by historians, who consider themselves members of the discipline of history? How do rhetoric and composition historiographies diverge from or overlap with these histories?

These visions for future research reflect an interest in how the field of rhetoric and composition develops over time—especially in the American university system. By looking at history from multiple angles—published scholarship, conference proceedings, oral histories—and at how historiographies are produced—with humanist or empiricist methodologies—these future studies will contribute to knowledge about disciplinary development where rhetoric and composition is just one case study. Such future studies will also contribute to how methodologies are developed and agreed upon within scholarly communities. A historical inquiry of research methods also contributes to better understanding how a discipline develops, how the discipline’s members shape it, and how outside forces also contribute to the discipline’s development.

Conclusion

Rhetoric and composition scholars have widely and imprecisely taken up the term new media. By tracing rhetoric and composition’s published research about new media, we can better understand new media’s position within the discipline. Additionally, a
longitudinal study of a term’s development over time aids in identifying how the discipline itself shifts over time. This study of the context and use of new media has also demonstrated the ways in which the field approaches historical studies and has argued for more transparent discussions of methods, including how scholars select a data set, ideologically approach the data, and analyze the data. Rather than including short methods discussions, this project suggests historical studies should be explicitly described. By specifically describing my methods of analysis, I presented an example for how historical studies can be constructed as RAD research. Using inductive coding, articles from four of the field’s key journals were analyzed. The results of this study suggest there exists no stable definition of new media within the discipline. Instead, new media is largely defined by equating it with prevalent characteristics (such as digitality, modality, interactivity). However, I propose new media is best understood as a socially timely, meaningful break from print traditions. The diverse ways in which new media has been incorporated into the discipline suggests rhetoric and composition scholars continually undertake the work of redefining the discipline. New media is one version of what rhetoric and composition aspires to be and mean. Connors (1997) once suggested rhetoric and composition, as a discipline, “seems sometimes to be spinning centrifugally to pieces” (p. 17). However, he further suggests the discipline is not spinning to pieces; rather, the diverse areas scholars in the field study simply demonstrate “the current avatar of a tradition of studying and using discourse that is as old as literacy and probably older” (Connors, 1997, p. 17). New media is one avatar used by rhetoric and composition scholars to explain the field and their work.
Appendix A: Data list

2000—2 articles


2001—2 articles


2002—2 articles


2003—10 articles


**2004—3 articles**


2005—9 articles


2006—7 articles


2007—11 articles


2008—10 articles


2009—11 articles


64. Selfe, C. (2009). The movement of air, the breath of meaning: Aurality and multimodal composing. College Composition and Communication, 60(4): 616-663. #KTNM


2010—4 articles


Appendix B: Inductive key word list from the data set

#1: researchpaper; models; composing; genres; multi; rhetoricalstrategy; multiwriting
#2: cyborgs, technology, recording, sound, responding, pedagogy
#3: newmedia, media, vocabulary, rhetoric, technology
#4: dichotomy, multimedia, digital, interactivity, form, content, meaning, visualrhetoric
#5: visualrhetoric, vocabulary, history, design
#6: newmedia, images, digital, pedagogy
#7: newmedia, consumption, prosumer, materiality
#8: pedagogy, access, institutions
#9: visualrhetoric, digital, hypertext, multimedia, literacies, vocabulary, digitalrhetoric, design, framework
#10: digital, multimedia, literacy, technologies, modes, media, semiotic, remediation, visuals
#11: technolgy, pedagogy, humanisti, computers, coursesdesign, humanity, multimedia
#12: newmedia, WAC/WID, pedagogy, technology
#13: newmedia, argument, marteriality, multimodality
#14: newmedia, community, access, history, trajectory
#15: newmedia, digital, technologies, pedagogy, stakes
#16: newmedia, vocabulary, definitions
#17: scholarship, tenure, newmedia, modes, publication, electronic, semiotics
#18: multimedia, argument, new media, visual rhetoric
#19: portfolio, representation, context, digital, models, remediation, multipurposed
#20: newmedia, frameworks, multimedia, digital, context (institutional and political arrangements), access, infrastructure, materiality,
#21: dichotomy, semiotics, modes
#22: newmedia, kineticism, movement, scholarship, vocabulary
newmedia, technologies, electronic writing, hybridity, categorization, visual, agent, vocabulary
newmedia, pedagogy, software, technologies
representation, modes, social, media, materiality, reading
visual, images, words, dichotomy
semiotics, multimodal, mode, media, literary, artifacts, binaries, printliteracy, history
multimodality, dichotomy, constraints, affordances
music, sound, modes, multimedia
newmedia, pedagogy, student, videogames
analysis, modes, sound, framework, technology, vocabulary
remediation, digitalrhetoric, vocabulary, text
newmedia, vocabulary, engagement, sound, media, analysis, postmodern, remix, feedback
flash, writing, analysis, technologies, software, dynamic
multimodality, modes, newmedia, digital, heuristics, invention
computersandwritings, hypertext, newmedia, rhetoricalsavvy, technology, analogy
newmedia, heuristics, rhetoricalprinciples, digital
practices, newmedia, textuality, embodied, hybridity
models, multimedia
digitalmedia, modes, modality, faculty, scholarship
popularculture; outofschoolculturalcompetencies; semiotics; popularmedia; design; multiplemedia; media
hypertext, newmedia, nondigital, digital, newmodels
digitalrhetoric, newmedia, pedagogy, rhetoricalprinciples
newmedia, copyrights, fairuse, pedagogy, research, composing
newmedia, literacies, multiliteracies, cool, cultures
ethics, hypertext, design, availabledesign
#47: media, convergence, rhetoric, pedagogy

#48: newmedia, technology, digital, product, literacies, multiliteracies, modes

#49: multiplemodes, intellectualproperty, history, acces, new media, prosumers

#50: secondlife, literacies, media, pedagogy, authoring,

#51: newmedia, manifesto, copyright, materiality,

#52: wikis, pedagogy, networks, technologies, newmedia, multimedia, collaboration

#53: sound, mode, digital, purpose

#54: media, remediation, digital, technologies

#55: newmedia, networking, profession, faculty, institution

#56: newmedia, profession, journals, publications

#57: vocabulary, visualverbaltext, framework, analysis

#58: outofschoolliteracies; modality; composingprocess; models; recursivity;
collaboration

#59: writingprogram, digitalrhetoric, literacy, writingenvironments, materiality,
evolution

#60: definitions, multi, technology, shiftinwhatistext, media, semiotics,
academicnonacademic

#61: old and new literacies; new media; media; texts; definitions; terminology;
multimodality; cognition; lines of research

#62: Assessment, rhetoricalprinciples, materiality, multimodality, vocabulary,
semiotics

#63: heritageliteracy, cultures, multimodal, codifiedesign, systems, modes, literacies

#64: semiotics, sound, institutions, NCTE, minoritytraditions, culturalvalues,
remediation, CCCC, modality

#65: multimedia, technology, literacy, rhetoric, audience

#66: assessment, multimodal, framework, technologies, newmedia, rhetoricalsavvy

#67: graduateeducation, digitized, technologies, convergenceculture, program

#68: places, digital, text, performativity, rhetoric

#69: remix, media, digital, pedagogy, culture, newmedia, politics, student
#70: multimodal, framework, multilingua, theory, method, literacy, literacy network
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