Grassroots Writing Research

Guidelines for Contributing to the Illinois State University Grassroots Writing Research Journal

Fall 2011

Deadlines

Although articles can be submitted at any time, these are the deadlines for the Fall 2011 Production Schedule:

- **Friday, October 21**: GWRJ must receive articles in order to provide feedback during the fall semester.
- **Friday, December 2**: Authors who wish to be published in the Fall 2012 issue must submit drafts by this date.
- **Friday, January 20, 2012**: GWRJ will contact all author regarding inclusion in the Fall 2012 issue (3.1).

Our Mission Statement

The GWRJ is dedicated to publishing work by writers and scholars whose work investigates the practices of people writing (and acting) in different writing situations. We encourage both individuals and groups to submit work that studies and explores the different ways that writers learn how to write for different genres and in different settings, not just within the boundaries of academia, but in all kinds of settings where writing happens. Because we identify as “writing research” any type of composition that endeavors to uncover new information about how people work with writing, or how writing works, a wide range of techniques and styles of writing might be applicable: For example, a 1st person narrative, an informal conversation about writing, a formal study of writing, or even an artistic production might all be useful techniques for developing a GWRJ article. However, accepted articles will be informed by either primary research into writing behaviors and activities and/or by scholarship in the field of writing studies that addresses theories of how people learn to compose in different situations.

The Grassroots Writing Research Journal is published by the Illinois State University Writing Program. Joyce R Walker, Editor Kristi McDuffie, Associate Editor. The Journal is designed by the English Department’s Publications Unit. Tara Reeser, Director.
Submissions

Articles can be submitted to the GWRJ at any time, although we do have deadlines for responding to work and selecting articles for upcoming issues (see page 1) Contact the Associate Editor, Kristi McDuffie <kristimcduffie@gmail.com> to submit your work, or with queries about possible submissions.

Queries and Drafts: The GWRJ has a strong commitment to working with interested authors to help them to prepare for publication. So if you have what you think might be a good idea, but you are not sure how to proceed, please contact us.

Citation

GWRJ articles should always provide citations for published works that are mentioned. However, in keeping with our flexible and open consideration of the term “scholarship,” we do not stipulate for a specific style of citation for articles. While some GWRJ articles will lend themselves to one of the common academic citation styles, other articles may use simple footnotes for important citation information, or use a more journalistic style of citation. However, all published texts (scholarship, works of art, etc.) referenced in any GWRJ article must be cited in some way that allows readers to refer to the cited work. Additionally, any primary research into the composing practices of individuals and groups must have appropriate permissions in order to be published (usually, this means having participants sign a consent form that we provide).

Style & Tone

Because we encourage so many different kinds of textual production and research in the GWRJ, issues of appropriate style and tone can be complicated. However, we can offer some basic style criteria for authors to consider:

1. The readership of the GWRJ is writers. It is not “students,” or “ENG 101 students.” GWRJ articles should attempt to provide valuable content to writers who are engaged in the activity of “learning how to learn about” genres. Our readers may be ISU students, staff, or faculty, but they might also be members of the wider Bloomington-Normal community or beyond.
2. “Teacher Narratives” are not acceptable as GWRJ articles. We are interested material that looks at literate activities from the position of a “writer” or a “researcher,” but articles that discuss ways to “teach” people about writing are not appropriate for this journal.
3. However, many of our readers are both writers and students at ISU (in either ENG 145 or ENG 101). This means that articles that focus on learning that happens in school are considered appropriate (see the section on “School and Society” for more information).
4. Language and style that is overly formal or “academic” may be difficult or unappealing to our readers.
5. A tone that situates the author as a “master” writer is often problematic (we call these “success” narratives, which are often how-to type articles, where the focus is on the author’s learned expertise). Authors need to be careful to remember that no one “learns” a genre completely or in completely simple way. So while writers (especially of first-person narratives) may write about successes, they need to problematize the genres with which they are working.
6. A tone/content that situates the reader as a certain kind of writer (whether master or novice), with certain kinds of shared experiences, can be problematic.
7. Whenever possible, articles should make use of published research about writing practices, but the tone/style for including such research needs to focus on simple explanations that are relevant and
useful to “non-scholarly” readers.
8. Articles are usually not strictly theoretical -- while theoretical perspectives are useful, it’s important for authors to think about how to make the theories applicable (in practical ways) to our readers.
9. Articles should be as specific as possible about the genre or set of writing activities they are studying. Generalized studies or discussions of “writing” are not encouraged. Additionally, examples of “writing-in-progress” are always encouraged, and are often necessary for articles to be useful to our readers.

Subject Matter

Almost any type of situation where texts are being conceived, produced, and used could potentially be an appropriate topic for a GWRJ article. Examples of genres that could be studied can be found almost anywhere -- and when authors consider the situations and activities in which genres are produced/distributed/used, the possible range of subjects and situations become almost infinitely variable. Focusing topics as narrowly as possible can be useful, and direct experience with (or observation of) certain kinds of writing situations tends to be a good way to narrow an article’s focus. Thus Amy Hick’s article on playlists, “Scroll-Point-and-Click Composition?” (vol. 2,1, pp 25-30) is an excellent example of a fairly narrow genre that is nevertheless interesting and complex. Authors might also investigate a rhetorical effect or strategy, or particular textual practice that extends across genres (these can be fascinating articles) but keeping these narrowly defined can be more difficult.

Media, Mode & Copyright Issues

The GWRJ can publish both visual and digital texts. We encourage multimodal texts, including still images, audio, video and hypertexts. However, authors working in these technologies need to be very careful about copyright issues, as we cannot publish any kinds of materials that may result in a copyright infringement. In some cases we can attempt to get copyright permissions (but in the case of materials such as works of art or graphics/images owned by large companies, this is often not possible). This is true for print-based articles that use images as well. Also, video/audio of subjects can be a tricky situation and requires a special kind of permission process. So you should contact the GWRJ editors before beginning this kind of work. Research using subjects who are considered “protected” populations (people under 18, people with mental disabilities, among others) are not acceptable for GWRJ articles unless the author has received approval from Illinois State University (or other institution) for Human Subjects research.

Honoraria

The GWRJ offers an honorarium to each author whose article is published in a print issue of the GWRJ. These honoraria are for $50.00 and are limited to the print edition. [Note: GWRJ may publish multimodal pieces, which will be “introduced” in the print edition, and provided with a link. These multimodal pieces would also be eligible for an honorarium]. In addition to the print edition, we are also beginning to publish an archive of “GWRJ writing research” articles, which may include articles in addition to those featured in our print issues. Authors may be invited to submit their work to this archive, which would still be considered an publication in the journal, but would not include an honorarium payment.
Research in School & Society

Many of the genres that are assigned in our classrooms at ISU might be interesting as the subject of study -- keeping in mind that even among classrooms in the same department there might be wide variations among genre expectations and requirements. Other kinds of social communications that happen throughout university settings (like emails between instructors and students, or documents created by social groups on campus) might be interesting as well. GWRJ is particularly interested studies of “research genres” (genres that use primary or secondary research as a core component), partly because we want to challenge the notion that “research papers” are a coherent genre, and partly because we know that “researched writing” is a type of literate activity that is very important to the mission and goals of universities, including ISU. However, we are also interested in research studies related to many other kinds of genres that can be found at ISU. The same is true for genres outside of the university -- almost any genres could potentially be interesting as the subject of study, remembering that specificity is key to developing a useful and interesting articles.

Personal Narrative (or not?)

A review of our current and archived articles reveals that many of our existing articles are written in a personal tone (that is, they use “I” and include personal stories and experiences). Some of our articles are actually “personal narratives” (with a clear relationship to genres such a memoir or creative non-fiction). For example, Hilary Selznik’s article “Researching one in Six Million,” (Vol. 2.1, pp. 83-88), is very similar to a creative non-fiction story in many ways. Although we do encourage a relatively informal register for all article, and while we are happy to publish personal narratives about writing experiences, we do want to stress that articles need not be written as first-person accounts, nor do they need to be written only about the author’s experiences. Studies of the writing of others are equally as important work that relates a single, personal perspective, and GWRJ would like to encourage writing research that looks beyond the personal.