

GRASSROOTS WRITING RESEARCH JOURNAL

Issue 10.2 – Spring 2020

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From the Editors

Rebecca Lorenzo

As our tenth year of publication at the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* ends, we are excited to share this new issue with our readers. The 10.2 issue includes a variety of articles by plenty of new voices that each provide intriguing and thought-provoking perspectives as they pursue investigations into a range of literate practices and genres. The thirteen new articles in this issue—which range from inquiries about how cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) can be used to make sense of literate activity to the importance of identifying writing anxieties, shining a light on the affective realm of writing—continue the journal’s long tradition of interrogating writing and literate activity in a wide array of forms and digging deep into all of their myriad complexities. Each article offers a unique point of view about how writing works in the world and offers each author’s personal experience with writing in a complex, nuanced, and sociocultural way. What we find particularly fascinating about this issue is the way that the work in this issue touches on a number of Writing Program Learning Outcomes through topics such as the genres of the Gamma Phi Circus and community theater, the discourse community of Kpop, and the uptake possibilities in the genre of journaling. Certainly, the work of the contributors to this issue continues to expand our collective understanding of the multifaceted nature of genres and the work of writing in the world in general. As such, we hope you enjoy this new issue as much as we do.

To start off Issue 10.2, the first two articles delve into writing research projects fueled by personal curiosity. First, **Katie Pardun** and her dog, Cody, visit the dog park for the first time, and Pardun applies CHAT to the experience, tracking her uptake as she and Cody interact with the genres of this new place. Next, **Natalie Williams** investigates the genres and types of writing in the Gamma Phi Circus, a long-running organization at Illinois State University and a well-loved part of life in Bloomington-Normal. Natalie interviews Marcus Alouan, the circus director, and discusses the benefit of writing about something you love. Both articles use ISU’s version of CHAT as their primary method of analysis to learn more about a topic that fascinated them in their own lives.

Similarly using ISU’s version of CHAT to aid her in researching the literate activities of a personal interest, **Allison Mool** explores the activity system of

community theater. She explores different roles in the system and how they are filled, illuminating the different parts of this activity system in order to make sense of the whole. Further investigating different forms of composition, **Jill Hentrich** and **Thelma Trujillo** consider genres that aren't mainly writing-based. Hentrich zeroes in on a sculpture on the ISU campus, *Logos*, and journeys through the writing process, ruminating on the message that *Logos* conveys to all who pass by. Trujillo, on the other hand, explores how gossip, or *chisme*, functions as a genre in the Latinx community. She also looks into how this oral genre has been remediated as a textual genre in order to serve different purposes.

Following this, the next articles enlighten us on the importance of considering language diversity and translanguaging when writing, and experiencing writing, in the world. First, **Hye Hyon Kim** investigates codeswitching between languages in the sport of baseball, comparing Major League Baseball (MLB) to the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) League. Digging in to a different aspect of Korean culture, **Katy Lewis** examines the discourse community that has developed around Kpop in America. Lewis talks through the different genres she encounters in this discourse community and how these genres, and the literate activities she participates in as a member of this community, affects the way she sees the world. Together, these two articles work to show that language diversity, and different language and genre practices, are all around us, demonstrating that it's important to be cognizant of these factors when engaging with writing in the world.

Next, **Jonathan Hopper** and **Justin Charron** implicitly explore the concept of writing research identity, albeit in different ways. Hopper, for one, explores the ways in which the uptake genre of journaling can help you keep and maintain your memories as you navigate the world. Charron, on the other hand, considers how certain ISU CHAT terms and uptake play into a writer's identity construction, bringing in various outside texts to support his points. While both articles avoid explicitly discussing writing researcher identity, they can provide relatable entry points for ENG 101 students, especially when paired with **Allison Hauser's** article. In her article, Hauser goes through her writing process and reflects on the anxieties that come with it. Hauser then connects these anxieties, and the imposter syndrome they foster, to her writing research identity, providing a more explicit discussion that may pair well with either Hopper or Charron's article.

The last article before this issue's literacy interviews is by **Jonathan Sabin**, and it holds this spot because of the ways in which Sabin exemplifies the goals of the Writing Program and ENG 101. Specifically, Sabin explains

that even subjects as divorced from writing as math involve writing and composition. In doing so, Sabin shows the value in the genre studies approach of ISU's writing program in that it teaches students to communicate clearly and effectively through writing.

Finally, the last two written pieces in this issue are *Grassroots Literacy Interviews*, a genre aimed at investigating the ways in which writing exists in the world through dialogue with community members and members of the workforce. First, **Heather Sanford** interviews her husband, Drew Sanford, about his voting process. During this interview process, Heather and Drew discuss the literacies of voting and how engaging with the voting process can make clear the ways in which dishonesty and misinformation infect the genres involved. Then **Charles Woods** interviews Vicki Hightower, exploring the various genres and literate activities involved in working for the YWCA. Both articles, then, offer contextualized examinations of writing in the world in an engaging and interesting way.

Per tradition, we end this issue with another reprinting of "Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*," which we again hope will continue to inspire future writing researchers to share their work with the *GWRJ*. As we look toward our tenth year of publication, we remain excited to work with writers to develop articles that continue to further our understanding of the complexity of literate activity and the way that writing works in the world. We are always inspired by the work of citizen writing researchers—their creativity and capacity for curiosity continually expands our collective knowledge and furthers the conversation of what writing is, what it means to be a writer, and what a writing research approach can teach us overall. We look forward to continuing to share new and innovative projects with you in future issues of the *GWRJ*.

Let's CHAT About the Dog Park

Katie Pardun

When Katie Pardun thinks her perfect fall morning will go to waste, it suddenly turns exciting as she decides to try out the dog park for the very first time. Read how genre comes into play as she takes her dog along on this new journey and analyzes how her uptake makes this trip one that she will remember forever.

The Start to My Not-So-Typical Morning

CHIRP! CHIRP! CHIRP! Bright sun. Crisp air. I hear scratching outside my bedroom door. Am I still dreaming? Confused, I hop out of bed to see what is going on. As I open my door, I look straight ahead. Nothing. But then, I look down. A bright, happy face and a wagging tail. In my opinion, there is no better sight. It is only 8:00 a.m., so I decide to crawl back under my covers. This time with my adorable Goldendoodle, Cody, at the foot of my bed.

Fall mornings are my favorite. Aren't they everyone's favorite? Nothing beats a perfect autumn day. But what exactly do people do on a day like today? I could go to the pumpkin patch, pick apples, or go to a corn maze—AHA! I look into the sweet, innocent eyes of my dog, and suddenly I have an epiphany. What better way to spend this wonderful morning than to take a trip to the dog park!

I've decided to run with the idea. My parents are a bit confused because I am usually not one to offer to take Cody for a walk, especially this early. I

guess I'll blame it on the fall weather. There's only one problem: I've never actually been to the dog park before. My dog has! But I'm not so sure I would understand any type of direction he'd be able to give me.

Let's Go Behind the Scenes

Almost too overwhelmed to follow through with this great idea, I take a seat at my kitchen table. Too many thoughts and ideas race through my mind and suddenly I cannot think straight. I decide to use this opportunity to tap into my inner scholar and expand my writer researcher identity. The Illinois State University writing program defines your **writer researcher identity** as how you grow as a writer in more than just one situation. This involves thinking beyond using your skills but being able to understand how your skills affect what you can do as a writer.

Heading to the dog park will allow me to investigate multiple **genres** (any kind of text that is produced). Now, some of you may be thinking genre is limited to fiction, nonfiction, drama, or whatever the case may be. If you happen to be reading this article while standing, you might want to take a seat because I've got some news for you. Aside from any topic you are reading about, genre includes any form of writing, whether menus, billboards, sidewalk chalk, or countless others. With all of this in mind, I came up with two questions regarding my spontaneous trip:

1. How did the various genres around me aid in my successful trip to the dog park?
2. Did my uptake and/or learning process lead me to make better use of the resources I had access to in order to make my trip successful?

After I thought all of this through, I was ready to take on the morning. Although this was going to be a new experience for me, I was ready to use the questions I brewed up in order for all the aspects of this trip to run smoothly (or so I hoped). Thus, in order for me and my pup to have a successful trip to the dog park, I not only had to investigate the different genres around me, but I also had to analyze how my uptake process would make this trip possible.

My Dog and I Start to ... CHAT

In order to answer my first question, I was going to have to analyze every step in this process. I know what you're all thinking—how time consuming!

Actually, it's not! I have the ISU Writing Program's version of **cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT)** here to help me. In Joyce Walker's article, "Just CHATting," she defines ISU's version of CHAT as "how people act and communicate in the world—specifically through the production of all kinds of texts" (Walker 71–2). In the version of CHAT that the ISU Writing Program uses, the goal is to investigate how different kinds of literacies and texts are produced and used in the world. To all my fellow dog owners out there, you know how much preparation goes into heading to the dog park. It's not as glorious as one might think. However, this preparation does come with a label. Here, I am using **activity**: "the actual practices that people engage in as they create a text" (Walker 76). In efforts to get ready, I gathered the leash, the collar, and some water. I threw on my tennis shoes and was ready to go. Even though I was not specifically creating a text, I was preparing myself to analyze those texts that affect my trip to the park. Activity includes, but is definitely not limited to, actions such as writing, drawing, or even calling someone on the phone to acquire their input. In simpler terms, I like to think of activity as preparing myself to achieve my bigger goal: successfully taking Cody to the dog park.

My next step was to successfully get me and my dog to the forest preserve. An easy task, or so I thought. Another key term of ISU CHAT, **ecology**, starts to impede my attempt at a perfect morning. Ecology is "the physical, biological forces that exist beyond the boundaries of any text we are producing" ("Key Terms"). I lean down to attach the leash to my dog's collar and BAM—he's aware of what's going to happen next. The thought of going to the dog park for my pup is equivalent to a kid in a candy store. Pure chaos. This uncontrollable event almost stopped me from swiftly boarding him into the car. After an extremely tiring ten minutes, I'm sitting in the driver's seat accompanied by Cody as my copilot. On a more serious note, ecology could be an event as horrible as a hurricane, power outage, or any other environmental factor that hinders the production of a text or action (Walker 76). In my case, I was lucky enough that it was just my silly dog filled with too much excitement. I plug the address into Google Maps, and we're off.

The Road to Success

My tires screech as I make the final right turn into the parking lot. I can't help but wonder if I'm more excited than Cody! Although I've never been to a park specifically made for dogs, this is not my first rodeo. Because I already have an idea of what comes into play as I take in this new project,

my **antecedent knowledge** is in action. I've previously brought Cody to the local forest preserve near my house, so I am well aware that I need to keep his leash on as we excitedly hop out of our car. Since I have been to a forest preserve before and I am at a semi-similar, but new, forest preserve now, I am able to use some antecedent knowledge to decide how to act.

The leash is on, and the car is locked. Check. But now I approach an unfamiliar scene. A double gate. I take a breath and gaze at the not-so-empty slabs of wood in front of me. Fortunately, there are multiple genres staring me in the face. I'm able to recognize that the sign in front of me is, in fact, an example of genre, and it is there to aid to my success on this trip. Written on a white rectangle before my eyes read, "Please lock the first gate before opening the second gate." Easy. I am barely standing in the enclosed box when Cody goes to take a leap of faith over the second gate, pulling us both into the park in a way that could lead to us getting kicked out.

To my amazement, I spot yet another sign that would save me any other sort of embarrassment that might result in my ejection from this park. My action of taking up these different texts and using them for my own good results in another ISU CHAT term. **Reception** "takes into account the ways people might re-use or re-purpose a text" (Walker 75). Bold, red letters exhibit the words "Park Rules and Regulations." Jackpot! Word after word, line after line, I feel fully informed about how to act in this (almost) foreign place. Additionally, after reading that I need to "keep [my] dog leashed while in parking lots, walkways and unfenced areas" (LCFPD), I gain more knowledge of how to follow the rules of the park. In my opinion, this policy is extremely necessary; however, someone else could come into this park thinking that rule is not fair to the freedom of their furry friend. (I know, who would think that?)

On the other hand, I can take into consideration "who a text is given to, for what purposes, using what kinds of distribution tools" by using **distribution** (Walker 75). Hence, a good example would be to take this information and message my dog-owner friends, informing them of how to stay safe if they decide to make the same spontaneous trip as me. From there, my friends could post that rule to their Facebook wall, sharing it with multiple followers at once. A text can be distributed in forms that include printed texts, instant messages, or even word of mouth. However, one should be careful in how they distribute texts and to who they're distributing the texts, because they run the risk of having someone else alter the original information into something different.

Making Comparisons

Finally, we're on our way! I unclip the leash, setting Cody free—the moment he's been waiting for since before we hopped in the car. I'm seeing examples of genre everywhere I turn: “Place Poop Bags Here,” “End of Fenced in Area,” and “Start of Trail.” I can't help but think about how this park compares to the suddenly lousy forest preserve I've been taking Cody to for months. I come to the realization of how much genre actually does matter for what someone is trying to accomplish.

The biggest difference between these two places that pops into my racing mind is that everyone at this dog park has something in common: the possession of—you guessed it!—a dog. Because the interactions of these people are awfully similar, it is an example of our final ISU CHAT term, **socialization**. Socialization includes creating texts based on a set of ideas or beliefs about known activities. At the dog park, we are all here for basically one thing: to get our pups some exercise and hopefully tire them out. Adversely, at our local forest preserve, some might be out for personal exercise, while others might just want to take in a beautiful sunset on the bridge. I conclude that this is why I have not previously seen as many helpful signs or rules that allow me and Cody to gain the full experience when we are closer to our house.

Putting All the Pieces Together

With it being my first time in this magical area, I wanted to partake in everything we possibly could. From walking the trail to playing fetch in the “Dog Exercise Area” (yes, another example of a genre), I came to the conclusion that this park just might have to become part of my Saturday morning routine.

I sit on one of the many benches provided and take in my surroundings. Before I know it, Cody's lying down right at my ankles. With him panting at my side, there is no doubt in my mind that I have done the job right. I knew my parents were going to be so thrilled when I walked into the house with a tired, ready-to-nap ball of fluff. Giving Cody a second to rest and a large bowl of water, I reattach his leash and approach the double gate, this time not so foreign. Stepping into the middle of the gate this time feels normal. Making sure both sides around me are closed, we slowly but surely make our way back into the car, both of us a little more exhausted than the last time we sat in these seats. As we pulled out of the parking lot, I'm comforted to see my copilot calm, cool, and collected. So, was the trip a success?

It's All About the Uptake

Walking back into the house, I feel empowered. This time, I was the one bringing back a tired dog that was once so energetic and, I hate to say it, sometimes annoying. (This might just be the only time I admit that Cody can get on my nerves. But, if you own a year-old Goldendoodle, you just might understand how crazy they get.)

While Cody snuggled in for his nap, it was time for me to do the same. Before falling completely asleep, I analyzed my uptake. This is where the answer to my second question above comes into play. According to Angela Sheets, a fellow *Grassroots* writer, “**Uptake** is the process we go through to ‘take up’ a new idea and think about it until it makes sense” (Sheets 136, emphasis added). Don’t be fooled: the uptake process is different for everyone. While I could go on and tell you how multiple people could have experienced this trip, I’ll keep it short and stick with my own.

Conclusion

I won’t bore you by explaining every aspect of this trip—I think there’s enough story above; however, I will inform you of the knowledge I gained. I like to think of uptake as my learning process or what I did to gain a greater understanding of a certain matter.

On this specific morning, I decided to look at the objects I read in more detail. By looking at the various signs around me at the dog park, I was clearly instructed about how to follow the rules and use the park to my advantage. I stepped out of my comfort zone as I took this trip by myself, not knowing if we’d both come out in one piece.

My uptake process started the second I grabbed Cody’s leash and became aware that CHAT terms did not necessarily pertain to only writing. However, I had multiple experiences where CHAT did connect to objects that contained text. During the start of this new adventure, I was able to pull previous knowledge out of thin air, which aided to my success. I used more antecedent knowledge than I was expecting to. At first, I believed this previous wisdom would conflict with my new experience; yet, it ended up making me a stronger writer researcher. Since my goal for the morning was to have a successful trip to the dog park, I was able to accurately analyze this process which aided greatly to my uptake.

My Final Advice to You

As I chose my topic for writing this article, I feared there would not be enough information to fully inform my readers about ISU CHAT and all the greatness it has to offer. I was completely wrong. I'd like to challenge each and every one of you to go about your daily activities in a "chatty" way. As you prepare yourselves for any new experience, take a step back and look at all the genres around you. Hey, there is no harm in doing so! You might even gain a new understanding in how to build up your uptake. As I incorporate a few ISU CHAT terms into my everyday life, I feel myself becoming a stronger writer researcher. With every new activity comes a new opportunity to expand your learning process. Hey, you might even want to try to take your dog to the park! I'm sure your parents will be happy with that idea, and, as you gain new uptake, so will you!

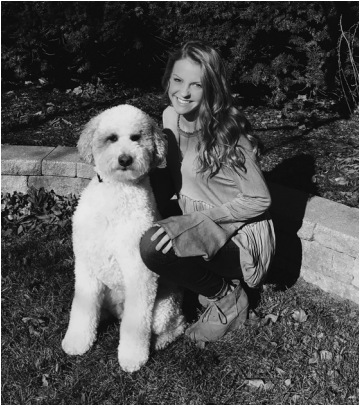
Resources

"Key Terms & Concepts for the ISU Writing Program." *ISU Writing*, <http://isuwriting.com/key-terms/>.

"Lakewood Dog Park—Recreation | Lake County Forest Preserves." *Lake County Forest Preserves | Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation*, 2018.

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Katie Pardun is an undergraduate student at Illinois State University. Due to her love for kids, she is majoring in Elementary Education. Katie absolutely adores her dog and loves spending time with him. She loves hanging out with friends and going to different ice cream places around her hometown. She is also a big runner and has run the Chicago half marathon two years in a row!

Genres are Everywhere! (Even in a Circus)

Natalie Williams

The Gamma Phi Circus has been a special organization at Illinois State University since 1929. There are specific people who devote so much time to the circus here that it has become their main career. In this article, Williams, a freshman member of the circus, interviews the circus director, Marcus Alouan, on what is so unique about his career and what types of genres and writing are included in supporting the Gamma Phi Circus.

Introduction

Throughout all of the years that I have spent growing up, writing was definitely not one of my strengths unless it involved creativity. I have never achieved decent grades in English classes for my first few drafts of assignments, and I would have to work extra hard and put in more time than other students to succeed. I remember asking my parents, “Why am I taking English class and writing essays if I do not want to become a writer when I grow up?” Their answer was that it was required to graduate and it would be useful for my life as an adult. I did not like that answer and as the stubborn teen that I was, I continued to complain about the fact that I was required to take English in college, even after my four consistent and painful years of boring assignments in high school. I then realized that, of course, my parents and teachers were correct, but they left out an important detail: the fact is that these terms and concepts that we learn in lectures are everywhere around us—in our jobs, our extracurriculars, and even our favorite movies. They don’t have to be learned or thought about in a negative, dry way. But enough about my experiences; it is time to stop the talk about my life and writing and get to the real details of this article.



Figure 1: Gamma Phi Circus (bgriffrob, 2012).

An Introduction to Genres

What is a **genre**? You may already know the answer to this question from previous writing classes, but you may have also learned a different definition. While I was growing up, genres were said to be broad types of movies or writing, such as nonfiction, fiction, horror, historical fiction, science fiction, and many others. So, my freshman year in English 101.10, my instructor had asked the class, “What is a genre?” and I happened to respond with, “Fiction or nonfiction.” She looked at me as if she were expecting more from me but that was all that I knew. That day, she gave an entire hour-and-fifteen-minute lesson on how genres are much more than a type of writing or movie. They can be present in pretty much everything if one takes the time to analyze it. The definition of a genre used in the ISU writing program is stated as:

... a kind of production that it is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable. It is important to understand that, in our program, we (mostly) don't use the word genre to refer to categories of things, the way it's used in music or literature (Rock, Pop, R&B, Rap or Fiction, Non-fiction, Poetry). Instead, when we use genres, we're usually referring to kinds of texts that can be produced. (Isuwriting.com)

There are over 100 genres or types of writing, not to mention the genres that are present in other types of communication. All of the writing assignments that you have done in your previous education involved different types of genres. Your everyday extracurricular activities involve different types of genres. Something as simple as a wall covered in old pieces of

bubblegum is a type of genre, believe it or not, and I read this information in Issue 9.1 of the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*. This article I am writing is even a genre. *Genres can be connected with different types of careers as well, because every career involves writing different genres which can be analyzed.*

But Isn't This Article About the Gamma Phi Circus? Why Are We Talking About Other Things?

Many ISU students still don't know that there is a collegiate level circus on campus, which is crazy because many people from different states come to watch the annual show in April. The Gamma Phi Circus (Figure 1) is one of two college circuses in the US; the other one is in Florida. ISU's student organization has been around since 1929 and is celebrating its ninetieth anniversary this year. Figures 2 and 3 are some images of performers in previous shows.

As a freshman at ISU, joining the Gamma Phi Circus was one of the greatest decisions that I have made, because I grew up with a background in gymnastics and tumbling. I even went to their annual summer circus camps for many years because I loved the opportunity to learn new skills that I never would have imagined. After high school, I was not interested in doing any sports at the collegiate level, and the circus became my main focus.

If you were asked what the most important job or part of the circus was, what would you end up saying? Many people would choose their answer to be the performers, while a smaller amount may choose the ringmaster, and the rest would choose the circus animals. However, we do not have animals in the Gamma Phi Circus. Taking a closer look into the performing arts, there are many other roles besides what automatically comes to mind when one thinks



Figure 2: GPC 2017 German Wheel (Kennedy, 2017).



Figure 3: GPC 2017 Triple Trapeze (B104, 2017).

of a *circus*. The circus would never be successful without the help of the stage crew, costume designers, tech and sound helpers, and the volunteers. But I would say that the most important jobs of circus would be the director and assistant director. The director of the Gamma Phi Circus is Marcus Alouan, and this will be his ninth year taking on this role. The assistant director is Ivan Stoinev, a circus performer married to Maritza Atayde, an aerial acts coach. Stoinev and Atayde come from generations of circus families. They have helped out with the Gamma Phi Circus since 2013 and both of their sons have performed in it. There are many other important faculty, staff, and students who devote their time to the circus, but listing them out would take longer and perhaps become boring. If you are interested in learning more, be sure to look up the circus at ISU and even stop by the Horton Gym, located across from Tri Towers.

Genres in Circus? Imagine that!

You would think that, with having the job of helping the circus, one would be organizing and planning the shows for every year and choosing acts for the show in April. It is a lot more complicated than that, and almost all of the jobs require—drumroll—writing and composing different types of genres! It helps to keep everything in words when trying to organize a circus so that important information will not be forgotten later on. Also, think of all of the advertising that the circus does in order to help recruit new people among campus—someone has to make those posters or flyers that are handed out to students every fall. For every April show, there is a program with all of



Figure 4: GPC 2010 Acro Sport acrobats
(Illinois State University, 2010).

the names and bios of the performers, their pictures along with the act they perform in, some advertisements, and messages from parents encouraging their children. That program is a genre itself. Besides the shows in April, the Gamma Phi Circus sells videos of the performances; circus products such as juggling balls, scarves, and frisbees; and also apparel. Even though these are composed of little or no writing, each one is a different type of genre. Genres do not need to be limited to writing or productions; they can be almost anything. Another example of a genre in circus could be a performance or exhibition composed of its own themes and ideas. Since circus itself is a form of art and performance, the genres and different ideas from creative minds are almost endless.

Genres in the Circus from Another's Perspective

To provide better details about the history of the Gamma Phi Circus and the types of genres present, I decided to interview our circus director, Marcus Alouan (seen in Figure 5), about his experiences and use of them in the program. I had previously explained the English definition of genres to him, and he told me that he knew it pretty well and understood what my questions meant.

1. What are some specific types of genres in circus?

Circus itself is the inspirer of genres around the world, because there are stories, movies, and literature that fascinate people on the topic of circus. More and more continue to be uncovered each year. Maureen Brunsdale, curator of special collections at Milner Library, has been able to decipher letters and bookkeeping of traveling shows to describe what was happening with circuses all throughout history, mostly in the '20s and '30s. Our historical records could be considered a special genre, our correspondence with others about our organization, and all of the things I listed before.

2. How long have you been the Director of the Gamma Phi Circus?

This would be my eighth full year.



Figure 5: Marcus Alouan, GPC Director (Kennedy, 2017).

3. The shows in April have a different theme every year. What is the theme for the April 2019 show? What were some of your favorite shows over the years and the themes?

Our 2019 show will actually be a surprise, but we will be celebrating our ninetieth year on campus. Broadway in 2017 was definitely my favorite overall for themes. Even though I lack experience in Broadway shows, I loved the music, and it was fun putting the acts together.

4. I have noticed the CIRCUS posters hanging from the wall on the gym. Could you explain what each letter stands for and how it is enforced here?

Commitment is incredibly important in our circus because without it, performers would not be able to achieve a high level of skill.

Integrity is an important life skill; we want to develop well-rounded leaders and citizens, and there are many examples that come from pursuing the circus arts.

Respect is what we ask of our members toward all, including other members. This helps promote a positive environment in the gym so everybody can achieve their best.

Courage is essential, not only to do the physical feats that we do, but also being willing to do it in front of thousands of people. Courage is also important because we ask our members to be courageous in their auditions, as well as living out the rest of the circus values, such as integrity. The right thing to do isn't always the easiest thing to do.

Unity is what connects us with the rest of the members and allows us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. It involves working as a team.

Service is essential because without it, we couldn't accomplish a show on the size and scale of what we do.

5. What types of writing are produced to help out the circus? In other words, is there a specific newspaper or pamphlet that is handed out across campus to help spread the news of the circus, or are there many different types of writing used to make it more popular?

There are quite a few different types: we have membership manuals that can be a little bit more technical and detail-oriented, newsletters that keep our alumni and supporters informed as to what's going on in

our program, correspondence with perspective members such as high schoolers considering to come to ISU, social media posts that connect us with the greater community, and we record our history and major events each year. There are many different types of writing, such as newspapers and some pamphlets that are handed out, along with magazine articles. We also write scripts for our radio ads for our performances—either I write them or Tom, our ringmaster, does.

So Genres and Writing Can Be in Any Career? Really?

This may disappoint some of the readers who are not fans of writing, but writing is involved in pretty much every type of job out there. The amount of workload varies, of course, but it is always required if you apply and get accepted for a job. Genres, however, can be much more than writing. They are in everything around you and can tell their own story. Analyzing genres is another skill that will be acquired in your life, because it is important not just to look at something, but to understand it as well. This may be overwhelming at first, but experience with more genres will make it less stressful. Your genre adventure has just begun, and there is much more to come.

Final Thoughts

The reason I chose this topic to write about is because when I was first introduced to genres in grade school, my interpretation was very shallow, and I thought that genres only existed in books and movies. My freshman year of college, I learned a completely different definition of genres that confused me and was a lot to take in. And the fact that I was learning about genres in English class made me believe that the term was only associated with works of literature. After lessons this year in this class, I have learned that expanding my mind makes one realize that not everything has a specific way. In other words, I realized that almost anything can be a genre. For example, it would be hard to even imagine a circus without all of the different genres associated with it. I want to show others that English does not have to be a boring, required subject, but that one can bring their favorite things into this class and learn the genres within them. Not everyone likes writing or is skilled at it, and that is why it is great that genres can be applied to almost anything. I wrote about the Gamma Phi Circus because circus performing is one of my favorite things to do.

Finally, the most important takeaway for me during this experience was that writing can be interesting if it's possible to write about something you

are passionate about. Also, I have become stronger as a writer by learning to meet a genre's conventions and aspects, while at the same time being creative—as long as I am making my point and backing it up. Just remember these words: *if you don't like to write, using genres can provide a way to start writing, especially when you are able to do homework or writing assignments about something you love!*

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Natalie Williams wrote this article while a freshman at Illinois State. She is now a sophomore pursuing a degree in Exercise Science, Class of 2022. After that, she plans on applying to the ISU accelerated BSN program, hopefully staying on at ISU another year and a half. She is an active member of the Gamma Phi Circus and has wanted to join it since she first attended the summer camp at age nine. When she is not at the circus or in class, she is either drinking Starbucks or binge-watching Netflix.



Exploring the Roles in the Activity System of Community Theatre

Allison Mool

In this article, Allison Mool dives into the world of community theatre, exploring the different roles and how they are filled. As this activity system becomes more complex, she finds that breaking each piece down lets you truly see the whole.

Beginning My Writing Research Career

As I was entering English 101, I was assigned some *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* articles to read. The articles talked about many ideas casually, like literacies, genres, and texts. I really didn't understand what I had gotten myself into by taking this class, and the great understanding that the authors showed of these complicated terms was a little daunting. They were vastly more complex than I understood. I knew that I needed to become familiar with these terms and this practice of treating your writing and interactions as research.

One term that particularly caught my eye was “**activity system.**” It seemed to be a common occurrence, but it was complex. I felt like everything was an activity system, but I didn't know how to describe them or put them into words. After the realization that I couldn't quite pin this idea down, I knew I had to think about it more.

What Even Is a Literate Activity System?

I learned that an activity system is basically a group of people (subjects) working towards a common goal (objective). They use tools, texts, and rules to accomplish this goal.

It seems simple, right? For example, Johnny and Sally are working on a book report. They use the tools of papers and computers. Their rules are that each of them must do some of the work. They use texts like their books. But in day-to-day life, activities and the systems they are a part of are more complicated. Usually, it's hard to pinpoint the exact rules or the exact tools when complicated life kicks in.

When diving into activity systems, I also realized that there are many other terms and ideas that connect to them. For example, we need to consider **cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT)**. While CHAT can be used in various ways, ISU's version of CHAT is a method that specifically allows us to talk about the production, representation, distribution, reception, socialization, activity, and ecology of a text.

We also explore **literacies**, which are the literate parts of the literate activity system. Literacies are bodies of knowledge that certain people have. For example, a professional football player is literate in football. He knows the rules, teams, and strategies that people use. I, on the other hand, am not literate in football ... at all.

With all of these terms to understand while exploring activity systems, I needed to look at a real-world example to understand how it truly worked. I thought about what subject in my life could challenge my understanding of activity systems. Because I have been around it for a while, I decided to explore my experiences in community theatre.

Community Theatre

When I started to think about this topic as an activity system, I realized that this is a very complicated process with many literacies and multiple activity systems running throughout. I decided to break them down and look at them from start to finish, from the very beginning of the process to the last show. So, let's look at the show I was recently a part of, *Evita*, at the Muni in Springfield, IL.

Scene #1: Bringing the Show

Before the performance, the rehearsals, and the auditions, there is a step that is done only by the director and their staff (assistant director, vocal director, and choreographer). They decide on a show using tools like scripts, videos, and discussion. Their objective is to pick what they want to do in the summer. When thinking about what they use in this process, I noticed that the scripts they use are not only a tool, they are also a text. These are made up of words and music, and they communicate to the directing staff what each play is about. Therefore, a text in an activity system can often also be classified as a tool.

They have rules. For example, they have to take into consideration their budget and their audience. They will also need to pick a show that will bring sponsors. This is important because every show at the Muni has a local business behind it. These shows would not be possible without their support, because the Muni is a group made up entirely of volunteers. The board members, the staff, the performers, and the concession workers are all volunteers. The board and many volunteer cast members put on four musicals each summer for the crowds of Springfield, Illinois. Without the sponsors, this wouldn't be possible.

Once the staff decides on a show that they would like to do, they then have to convince the Muni board to accept their show through a proposal process. They present their vision and ideas to the board, and if the board approves them, they are a part of the next year's season. The staff of *Evita* underwent this process last fall.

Scene #2: Auditions

The audition process is another activity system that builds into the whole activity system of community theatre. The people involved in auditions are the staff of the four shows that are casting all at once, the people auditioning, and the people running the auditions, like the people who check you in and the accompanists. This whole process takes place to accomplish one goal, to cast a show for the summer.

When I first decided to audition, I went online to sign up for a slot and filled out my information, such as conflicts and past experiences. I rehearsed my music and waited nervously for the moment to arrive. On the day-of, I checked in at a table and was given a number and my picture was taken. Looking back, I realized that an audition number is actually a very important text in this activity system. Using ISU's version of CHAT, we can look at

the representation of this text. It connects many documents and helps with communication. The number is the order that I sing in during the first part of the audition. The staff put me in a place to perform the dance based on my number. They keep track of their opinions and comments about my performance based on my number. They access my audition form and my communication information through my number. This is how they gave me a call for callbacks and offered me a part in the show. All of these texts (the number, the audition forms, and the notes) are connected, and these decisions were made based on the texts connected to the number. Therefore, these three digits represent my entire audition process.

There are also other tools through this process, like sheet music and sides, which are small pieces of the script that you read at auditions. As an auditionee, I also used dance and my voice to complete this process. But since this is a long day, you also use tools like water and snacks. You usually dress more nicely at the vocal audition to impress the staff, and then you dress in clothes that you can move in and dance shoes for the dance auditions. These are tools that are necessary to succeed in this process.

While thinking of rules, I remember that every audition process has different rules and requirements. At college, we were supposed to perform a monologue. But at the Muni, I had to complete both a vocal and a dance audition. While I was singing at the Muni, I had to stand on the big red “x” in the middle of the floor. At college, I was allowed to use a chair and stand wherever I chose. I also had to bring music to the Muni so that an accompanist could play with me, because you aren’t supposed to sing *a capella* (with no accompaniment). Whereas for college auditions, you don’t usually sing.

After initial auditions, there are callbacks with more rules and challenges to complete, like dance numbers and songs that we had to learn on the spot and perform in small groups. This process can involve different texts, like a schedule of what shows are holding what callbacks where. There are also maps and people to help you. You may also need dance shoes and music with you. It is a very complex and nerve-wracking part of the process, but it’s very important to try your best and stay calm in this part of the activity system.

Socialization in terms of CHAT is made up of the interactions that people have when they are producing, distributing, and using texts. So as these people use the audition numbers, the script, and work towards producing the show, it is socialization.

Auditions are also an example of a literacy in theatre, because people speak of auditions and the process in ways that people who have never experienced auditions wouldn't understand. They wouldn't know what happens in a dance callback or relate to our audition horror stories the way that other theatre people do. These experiences build a common language. Before I received a callback, when people spoke about what had gone on, it seemed like a mystical, unattainable world. Now that I have been through multiple auditions, I know how scary and exciting they can be.

Scene #3: Rehearsals

The rehearsal process can start a couple months before a show opens. It is a process involving the cast and the directing staff. There might also be a stage manager keeping everything in line and taking notes. There could even be a rehearsal accompanist to help with vocals. These people working together is another example of socialization in ISU's version of CHAT.

There are many texts and tools involved in the rehearsal process. Some texts are very important like the scripts and the schedule. The script is the map for the show. It is where cast members can write notes and learn what they are supposed to be doing during the show. Without the script, we, as a cast, would have been very lost. Without the schedule, no one would know what to do. The schedule determines what is being worked on and who needs to be where. It is a very important part of rehearsals, because without it, I probably wouldn't have ever shown up, and then I would've been kicked out of the show, and no one would want that.

We used other tools like dance and music to produce this text of the show. Without these, the rehearsal process would have just been us sitting around quietly, staring at each other. These are tools that the cast has to work hard to master. In order to do this, we used other tools like cameras to film the dances and allow us to practice later. We used pencils to write down instructions and notes. The rehearsals were a long process, but these available tools made it possible to improve and build this show.

We had many rules in the process, many of them seem obvious, but they are still necessary for the activity system to run smoothly. There were rules like don't talk when the directors are talking, because they needed to communicate with us and show us what to do. We needed to bring our tools like our dancing shoes and our scripts. We needed to show up on time and be ready to work. We needed to be kind, positive members of the activity system. These rules were mostly unspoken and taught by example. There were times, however, when the directors had to quiet the cast down or ask

us to be on time and focused. If you have never been in a show, discovering exactly how to behave is a learning process, but it's a very important part of the activity system.

The goal was to enable this cast to put on great performances by learning the music, blocking (instructions on where people are supposed to go on stage, like sitting down or falling at certain times during the show), and dancing. It prepared the cast to move to the stage and tell a magnificent story.

Scene #4: The Tech Side of Things

During this process, there are also many other people working on the show. They are people who understand their jobs very well. They are the crews that design the costuming, the sets, the sound and the lighting for the show. They take up the text of the script and repurpose it into the visual text of the show.



Figure 1: This is a picture of me in costume during the show. The costumes we wear help us be in character and fully represent the show.

They use many tools such as sewing machines, saws and drills, cords and soundboards, and lights and ladders. They also use texts like the director's vision through maps, charts, or pictures to guide them. Our director could have set *Evita* in the future and on Mars, instead of in 1940s Argentina. The costumers could have designed space suits and alien fashion. The set crew could have made a backdrop of a sprawling Martian landscape. However, in this case our director wanted it to be true to the original setting. The crew made balconies and costumes for the classes of Argentina. Figure 1 is a picture of me in a costume from the show, and as you can see, our designer didn't go for the Martian look.

When thinking about this in terms of ISU CHAT, we can see that representation is very important. That is the tech department's job: to represent the script and ideas on stage for the audience to see. They help the audience understand the text of the show. For example, Eva Perón dyed her hair blonde during her lifetime. So, in this show our costuming department gave everyone brown wigs to contrast with Eva and have her stand out (and it is Argentina, so most people had brown hair).

They also use texts like patterns for designing costumes and measurements of the actors. They might need instruction manuals for new equipment. There are endless

resources that could be used for the technology side of things, because it is just as important as any actor. As I've heard many people say, without the tech department, actors would just be crazy people, naked and alone in the dark, and I doubt people would pay to see that.

They also have rules like how to use the tools, how much money they can spend, and how much time they have. For instance, our costume designer only had so much money to spend renting costumes from other places. She also had many rules. For example, she wasn't supposed to run over her finger with the sewing machine. She also wasn't supposed to send anyone onstage unclothed. Every tech department had their own rules of these sorts in order to make the process run smoothly. I've been in shows like this one where we only had to find shoes, but I've also been in shows that made us find our costumes based on the director's instructions. Every show is different and has different expectations.

Rules like these may originate from the Muni board, or they could be decided on by the tech crew and the directing staff working together. Therefore, every show could have slightly different rules. For example, there are shows, like *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, where actors will wear riskier clothes, but the staff decides how things will run and what they want the budget and final product to be.

There are also many different literacies on the technical side of things. The terms used in costuming wouldn't make sense to some people. Some of the lighting terms, like the degrees of light or how to shutter lights, are not common knowledge, either.

Scene #5: The Run of the Show

The run of the show is the time from the first performance to the last. It involves the performers, the crew, and audience members. They are all working in harmony to accomplish the objective of performing and taking in the show.

There are tools like programs, food, seats, speakers, costumes, music, and tickets. The biggest text used during this part of community theatre would probably be the programs. Programs are their own **genre** of text. The genre of programs usually includes the cast list, the cast bios, the order of scenes in the show, and many advertisements. These programs are given to audience members upon entering and they use them many times. They can find out who plays the characters or what's next at any time they choose. It is a nice thing to have because it gives information and adds to the overall experience.



Figure 2: This photo shows my friends and I after the show was over. We were able to discuss the aspects of the text (the show) through socialization.

There are many rules for the audience members, like no talking during the show, turn off cellphones, and no flash photography. There are also rules for the cast. One big rule is that the show must go on. No matter what happens, we can't break character or stop performing. If we get off track, we have to bring it back and continue as if nothing has happened. (Unless it starts raining, then we run inside because it's an outdoor theatre.)

People come to see the show to enjoy it or to support their loved ones. At this moment, in terms of ISU CHAT, the show is getting distributed and people are receiving it. When the show is over, they get to take the text of the show and talk about it. This is also socialization.

Scene #6: Strike

The very last part of the community theatre process is the tear down, or strike as it's called in theatre. All the cast and crew help in order to do this in a timely manner the last night of the show.

There are some texts used. The stage manager posts a list of teams and jobs, so everyone knows what to do and how to help. Without this list, people would stand around and not know exactly where they should be. Things wouldn't move as quickly and wouldn't be as successful. Many other tools are used like drills, brooms, baskets, trash bags, and cleaning sprays to get the backstage area spotless and ready for whatever comes next.

There are some rules that come with the job. All of the wood used in the set needs to be stored or disposed of properly. The costumes need to be returned and cleaned. In order to do this, every cast member must bring their list of costume changes and costume pieces to the costumers and get "checked in." The floors and sawdust need to be swept. The props must be stored. The screws need to be picked up off the ground.

All of these things happen so that the next show can come in and we are out of their way. We also want to take care of the materials we have, so using them properly and then putting them away lets us use them longer and have better shows in the future. It also shows respect to the space, the people coming next, and the people who have worked so hard to build and gather all of the materials. If everything was destroyed after one use, it would be wasteful and unappreciative of the gifts given to us.

What Have We Learned?

During this breakdown of the activity system of community theatre, I realized how complex activity systems are. There is so much under the surface of everything we do. Hopefully moving forward, we can appreciate everything that goes into the activities we are a part of. Through production, reception, representation, and socialization, we saw a small peak at how CHAT is always working in the activity system of theatre. We also saw how different genres of texts are present in each system, such as scripts and programs in theatre. We can see all of the moving parts and understand exactly how we fit in. Hopefully we can better appreciate those things in play around us and act our roles in the many activity systems of life.



Allison Mool is currently a sophomore majoring in Molecular and Cellular Biology at Illinois State University. She is interested in going to medical school in the future. She is usually doing homework, but when she catches a break, she might be watching a Marvel movie or eating Dairy Queen.

Public Art: Investigating *Logos*

Jill Hentrich

In this article, Hentrich explores public art as a genre on the campus of Illinois State University. She walks through her journey of the writing process as she shows how one sculpture in particular, named *Logos*, is a genre and communicates a message to all who pass by.

My first day of college. Straightened hair. New backpack. Phone in one hand and a water bottle in the other. I walked to my English class feeling nervous, but excited, too. I crossed the pavement and headed to Stevenson Hall at Illinois State University. Before reaching my destination, a circular bed of flowers with a tall, interesting sculpture lay in my tracks (see Figure 1). I wasn't exactly sure what it was supposed to be, but to me, it looked like a giant gold swirl. I continued on my way and didn't think much about it. However, passing by the sculpture every day sparked my curiosity. For some reason, it intrigued me, and I wanted to find out more—specifically, what exactly the sculpture was supposed to be.

In my English class that semester, we learned about the world of writing and how the writing process works. The writing process can include why we write, how we write, and what we write about. We also learned what genres are and how they play a large role in our writing and our daily lives—even if we do not realize it! Taking a moment to examine all of the elements that make writing happen helps us make sense of a genre and helps us make sense of the world. So, I decided that I wanted to dive deeper and write about this interesting sculpture that refused to leave my mind. To begin my



Figure 1: The sculpture named *Logos*.

own writing process, I needed to examine the sculpture as a genre. Doing so will allow us to understand this piece of art in a deeper way. After reading this, maybe you will be able to look at the sculptures on your college campus as a genre, too, and see them in a way you haven't before.

How Is This Sculpture a Genre? (Let's Investigate)

Think about a time when you saw something and didn't know what it was. For example, maybe you saw a strange object on your kitchen counter, or maybe you went to a museum and saw a strange painting. Regardless of what it was, you probably had a bunch of questions running through your mind. Well, when I first saw the gold sculpture, I had questions too. What is it? What is it supposed to be? What's its meaning? What's its purpose? Who put it there? Why put it there? I didn't realize it then, but the sculpture that I was questioning was a kind of genre. A **genre** is "a kind of production that is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make

that production recognizable” (“Key Terms & Concepts for the ISU Writing Program”). To explain it in another way, you can say that a genre is a text (or production) that conveys meaning. If you think about it, the gold sculpture had to get there somehow and someway. Somebody had to create the idea. Somebody had to design it. Somebody had to physically build it and put it there. Such a big and detailed project had to have been made for a specific purpose. The sculpture is not sitting at Illinois State University for no reason. It has to possess some kind of meaning, and that’s what makes it a genre.

After realizing that I was looking at a genre, I still needed to know what *kind* of genre it was. In order to do this, I had to dive into some good ole genre research. **Genre research** means to find the norms of a genre. And in order to find the norms of a genre, you must identify its conventions, or more specifically, its genre conventions. **Genre conventions** are features of a genre, or all of the elements that go into building or recognizing a text. Identifying the conventions (or features) of something can help you recognize what kind of genre it is. Therefore, I began my genre research by observing the sculpture’s genre conventions. These were the conventions I found: it is outside, very large, most likely made of metal, tall, gold in color, swirl shaped, and on public display. Noting these conventions helped me recognize that I was looking at some sort of art piece. However, I still needed help pinpointing what kind of art this sculpture was, so I continued my genre research by going to our good friend Google for assistance. I typed “sculptures on college campuses” into the search bar. I surfed the web for some time; I clicked on different links and images and ended up discovering that the gold sculpture was a type of “Public Art.” Public art is an expression and response of an artist, which is placed in a public setting in order to form community (“What is Public Art?”). By doing genre research and recognizing the sculpture’s conventions, I was able to connect and compare it to the information I found online. It allowed me to figure out that the genre of the sculpture is simply Public Art.

I still had more investigating to do. Now that I’ve discussed the gold sculpture as a genre, it’s time to perform a bit of content research. **Content research** is “any kind of research a person might do to gain knowledge they plan to use in some kind of production” (“Key Terms & Concepts for the ISU Writing Program”). In other words, you can say that it is the research you do about your specific topic. There is often confusion between genre research and content research. So, to be clear, when we did genre research on the gold sculpture, we were simply researching to find out what *kind* of genre we were exploring. With content research, we are narrowing it down and researching for specific information about it. This is where we can tackle questions like: What is the name of the sculpture? Who made it? Who designed it? What

does it mean? So, let's conduct some content research and dig up the answers to these questions!

Revealing its Meaning . . .

I spent time doing content research and found fascinating answers to all of my questions. I performed this content research by beginning with our good friend Google again. I tried to find out as much information about the sculpture this way. I also made an appointment with my English professor to help guide me through my research and writing process. She ended up pointing me to an extremely useful resource which contained an abundance of information and history on the gold sculpture. I wish to share what I discovered with you now.

First of all, lo and behold! The gold sculpture's real name is *Logos* (I bet my title makes a lot more sense now). *Logos* is, in fact, a flame. The sculpture was built in 1969 in remembrance of Adlai E. Stevenson II (Marusarz). Hence, it is located near the well-known Stevenson building. Stevenson was a former governor of Illinois but also an overall supported statesman (Marusarz). He was especially praised for his respected and role model-like character. The Cold War was occurring during this time, so the creators of the statue hoped to represent Stevenson's admirable character, which was one of optimism and hope (Marusarz). A man who played a big role in designing and sculpting *Logos* was Henry Mitchell. While planning the design, Mitchell demanded for the sculpture to be "a symbol of his lofty ideals" and not a "statue of Stevenson's personage" (Marusarz). I personally think that it was a unique idea to create an art piece that symbolized him, rather than making a statue of Stevenson himself. One more interesting fact is that there originally used to be a fountain around the flame, which is why the sculpture's original name was "the Adlai E. Stevenson Memorial Fountain" (Marusarz). They later changed it to "The Flame" and then changed it for a third time to *Logos*. So, as we can see, the sculpture went through quite a transformation. It felt very rewarding to learn about the sculpture that I passed by every day while going to class. By examining the sculpture's genre through genre research, its genre conventions, and content research, the answers that I always wanted were revealed!

Diggin' Deeper

To learn more about public art and the sculpture *Logos*, I decided to walk around the Illinois State campus to find other public art pieces. I knew it would be helpful to compare *Logos* with other sculptures around campus. By

doing so, I was performing some genre analysis. Genre analysis is similar to genre research; however, they are still different. **Genre analysis** is the activities involved in looking closely at a particular genre (multiple samples and variations) and investigating all the different features that might be present. Some key words/phrases in that definition are “multiple samples,” “variations,” and “all the different features,” By examining other pieces of public art, not just *Logos*, I could become more knowledgeable in the understanding of the genre I was writing and researching in. I could learn more about the different features that could be presented in public art.

While I was looking at the other pieces on campus, I immediately noticed that a few of them had some sort of visual plaque or writing presented. Most of the art that I saw did not include this, so I took special notice for the few that did. For example, one piece that I came across was that of a large metal hand and directly below it was engraved writing (see Figure 2). My first thought was . . . and you guessed it . . . why does this art piece have writing included while others don't? This hand sculpture doesn't have too much information on it, but it at least shows the public its title and an



Figure 2: A public art piece at ISU with information engraved.

indication for why it's there. I went back to *Logos* to double check for any type of writing, engraving, or sign, but, yet again, I found nothing. Overall, this experience showed me the importance of genre analysis. By comparing and contrasting *Logos* with other variations of public art, I discovered more about this genre. It also opened up an opportunity for me to ask more questions and to continue my journey in genre research.

Let's Open a Tool Box and Keep CHATting

To help us further understand the genre of Public Art, we can use a handy dandy tool called **CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory)**. In the Writing Program at ISU, we think of CHAT as a huge box containing specific categories (or tools, if you will) that “help us understand a genre in practical ways that will impact our writing” (Walker). By using ISU's version of CHAT as a framework, we can understand more about the genres around us. There are many terms that relate to literate activity, but I would like to focus on two CHAT terms in particular: representation and reception.

I would like to first mention representation. **Representation** is “related to the way that the people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it (how they think about it, how they talk about it)” (“Key Terms & Concepts for the ISU Writing Program”). With the *Logos* sculpture, there are many ways in which we can think of representation. Thinking back on the history of the art piece, all those who participated in the making of the sculpture (Mitchell, Stevenson's family and friends, and others) heavily considered the statue's representation while creating it. It's very obvious how much thought the creators put into *Logos*. They spent a lot of time discussing and debating what the sculpture should mean, what it should be named, what it should look like, how it should be made, etc. They conceptualized and planned what they were producing in a thoughtful way. They had to go through a very specific process in order to finish the project. The creators of *Logos* gave an immense effort and put time into making the sculpture what it is today. I'm sure they hoped that its beauty and meaning would live on and on.

After investigating *Logos* and its rich history, I wanted to explore how it lives on today. Now that we understand what the sculpture means, we can consider what it means to others. What does the public think when they see *Logos*? What do they think it is? This is where I would like to mention a second CHAT term: reception. **Reception** is “how a text is taken up and used by others” (“Key Terms & Concepts for the ISU Writing Program”). It considers how people receive a text and what they think about it. There are a variety of people who pass by *Logos* every day (teachers, students,

visitors, children, etc.); however, I wanted to focus particularly on what the statue means to students. I went around the campus and interviewed several students about the statue. I asked every person the same three questions:

- Have you ever wondered about the statue?
- What do you think the statue is?
- What do you think it means? (What do you think it symbolizes?)

Here are some of the responses I received:

1. “Yeah I’ve wondered about it. It looks like a swirly stick . . . and I have no idea what that would mean.”
2. “Yes I have! It looks like a candle, and maybe that symbolizes how we can flourish and reach our potential.”
3. “Yes, I think it’s supposed to be a flame? That could symbolize enlightenment or learning.”
4. “I’ve thought about it before. Maybe it’s a feather. It could mean that we come together as one.”
5. “Yes but I could never figure out what it was.”

After interviewing each person, I recognized something that they all had in common. I received various responses, but they all answered yes to the first question. Each student said that they’ve wondered or at least thought about *Logos* before. This is a good thing! I believe the creators of *Logos* would have appreciated that students are thinking about the sculpture or at the very least, noticing it. Looking back on all of the responses, I got a wide variety of answers. A few of them were almost spot-on! Even if they didn’t get it 100%, they were on the right track. However, I would say that there were more people who didn’t know what the statue was or its meaning. Most of the people that I interviewed thought about their answers really hard and sounded uncertain while speaking to me. I wasn’t surprised by this, of course, because at the beginning of my journey I wasn’t completely sure what it was either. To me, this can uncover some difficult questions that I think are important to consider. What’s the point of the statue being there if very few people understand its exact meaning? With no plaque or sign, how are students supposed to easily discover the sculpture’s name or rich history? However, one way to look at it is that *Logos* is open for interpretation. Even if one does not know everything about it, they can use their imagination and create their own idea of what it means to them. Another observation that I would like to point out is that after every single one of my interviews, each student asked me to reveal the sculpture’s name and meaning. I never

asked them if they wanted to know: they always beat me to it! This was obviously because they were genuinely curious! Public art like *Logos* can be viewed through so many different perspectives. Each person has their own reception of it. To one student, *Logos* may simply be a piece of art that lives on their campus and adds to its beauty. To another student, it may spark their interest and cause them to ponder its meaning. And to another, *Logos* may have a personal meaning to them. Overall, by using the CHAT terms representation and reception, we can see how our understanding of *Logos* can grow even further.

Conclusion

When I began to write and research *Logos* as a genre, I did not realize how many elements played a role in producing such a piece of work! Literate activity is always around us and communicates in ways we may not realize. *Logos* may be a normal piece of public art; however, it is much more than that—it speaks to everyone who passes by. Exploring *Logos* as a genre with the use of CHAT helped me make sense of my journey through the writing process.

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Spilling the Tea on *Chisme*: Storytelling as Resistance, Survival, and Therapy

Thelma Trujillo

This article explores how gossip (or *chisme*) as a genre functions in the Latinx community and the ways it has been remediated as a textual genre to serve different purposes.

The women I love do not text or write to me. Both my mother and grandmother do not own cell phones. That sounds crazy, right? Believe me, they have tried to embrace the idea. Who wouldn't? A tiny slab of glass and metal connecting you to the rest of the world sounds amazing, and that's because it is. But not to my mom and grandma. They value oral communication and find any writing genre, whether it's a letter, e-mail, or text message, difficult to compose.

This aversion to writing can be traced back to the literate activities my mom and grandma used in their youth. My grandma and her family grew up in Jojutla (pronounced "hohootla"), Morelos, Mexico. Although she attended elementary school for a couple of years, she did not complete her schooling. Luckily, my grandma's parents owned a convenience store in their neighborhood, so instead of attending school, my grandma helped maintain her family's business. Some of the literate activities she regularly practiced were keeping store inventory and making poster signs that advertised the weekly sale items—both inventory lists and store signs are **genres**, or productions that can be recognized by certain conventions and features.

However, when she migrated to the United States, the genres she used and the literate activities she practiced changed. In this new country, she had several small jobs, but her main job was as a dressmaker for a clothing factory. This occupation required her to learn different genres, such as dress designs and measurement charts. Both jobs, storekeeper and dressmaker, did not require a lot of reading or writing, but they did require learning new **genre conventions**, or features that make a genre recognizable.

On the other hand, my mom received an American education, but many of the writing genres she was taught in school were **mutt genres**. A mutt genre is a writing genre that is not used outside of a school setting, such as book reports and five-paragraph essays. My mom didn't feel that she was good at these genres, so she did not pursue a college degree and worked retail instead. Both my grandma and mom worked jobs that did not require the learning or practicing of various writing genres. As a result, they did not feel the need to use writing to communicate with people, especially outside of work.

Another reason why my mom and grandma might prefer oral communication is because they are somewhat bilingual. I say "somewhat" because my grandma recognizes basic English words and phrases (like hello, please, thank you, and I love you) and remembers all the words to Frank Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight," but she will not be able to communicate in English beyond this knowledge. To transfer and translate the grammatical structure and writing conventions from one language to the other, you would have to sit down and compare the structure and genres of each language. In other words, it would take a long time. However, if you're conversing and you happen to switch from Spanish to English, it wouldn't disrupt the conversation or meaning of the message. This language switching, or **translingualism**, often occurs when I communicate with my mom and grandma, especially when we are *chismeando* (gossiping). For this article, I will examine how *chisme* has remained a "storytelling" genre that has been **remediated**, or repurposed, from an oral tradition to a verbal and textual one: poetry.

Gossip

The literal translation of the Spanish word *chisme* is "gossip." What comes to mind when you hear the word "gossip"? Your answer to this question might be different, but for me, I think of the TV show *Gossip Girl* (the word is in its title, I can't help not thinking about it) and tabloid magazines announcing Jennifer Aniston's pregnancy (which happens at least once a week). Although

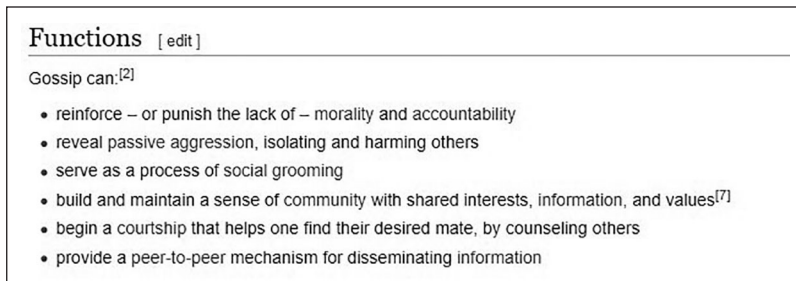


Figure 1: Wikipedia’s list of how gossip functions.

I already know what gossip means, I thought it would be interesting to look up some of its definitions online and see if there are any variations. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines gossip as a “casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details which are not confirmed as true,” and Wikipedia defines it as “idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others . . . also known as dishing or tattling.” In this context, Wikipedia is a quick and useful source to get the overall perspective on the word gossip. Along with this definition, the Wikipedia page also offers several ways that gossip functions (Figure 1).

Although the OED’s definition provides a more neutral definition than Wikipedia, both definitions suggest that gossip has no intellectual or truth value. But wait, aren’t some of the functions listed by Wikipedia *good*? Who wouldn’t want to build “a sense of community with shared interests, information, and values”? Can gossip be much more than just shallow or idle talk? Let’s examine how gossiping works in different communities.

Chisme

When I think about the word *chisme*, I don’t think about its literal translation. Instead, I think about my grandma telling me a story about her sisters or my mom describing the reviews she read for some skincare product. The *Gran Diccionario de la Lengua Española* defines *chisme* as “*Noticia o rumor que se cuenta por placer o para criticar*” (news or a rumor told to please or criticize). It’s difficult to define a word and genre with so many functions, but I think “rumor” is far too short of a description for what *chisme* can accomplish.

When examining the definitions of gossip in both English and Spanish, there also seems to be little consensus over its genre conventions. Gerrard Mugford, a linguistics professor at the Universidad de Guadalajara, describes one difference between the English word “gossip” and the Spanish word *chisme*: “A noticeable difference between Spanish and English is that gossips in Spanish will often use the word *chisme* (gossip) in their openings in

contrast to English where the pretense at secrecy and discretion is frequently an overriding concern” (Mugford 151). Some of the Spanish openings for gossip are the following:

Deja te cuento un chisme . . . (Let me tell you a piece of gossip . . .)

Te tengo un chisme . . . (I have some gossip . . .),

Te tengo que contar algo de . . . (I have to tell you something about),

and *Fíjate que . . .* (Guess what).

Spanish-language gossip acknowledges the lack of secrecy in this activity, while English-language gossip asks their listeners to keep the information to themselves (ex: “Don’t tell anyone but . . .” and “just between us . . .”). The lack of secrecy of *chisme* means that those who interact in this activity can disseminate and co-construct the information they receive. Furthermore, as a group activity, gossiping can help create group cohesion, as well as reinforce normative behavior, values, and attitudes among communities.

I belong to two different communities: the Mexican-American and the Latinx community. The Mexican-American community are people of Mexican descent who were born in the United States. On the other hand, the Latinx community is much bigger and includes all people who were either born or have descended from a Latin American country, such as Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. Furthermore, if you’re familiar with Spanish, you already know that all nouns have a grammatical gender. Nouns ending in *a* are usually marked as feminine and those that end in *o* are masculine. In the word *Latinx*, the *a/o* ending is replaced with an *x* to include people who identify as non-binary. Both these communities have shaped the way I think about *chisme*/gossip.

Rubén Angel, a queer Latinx sociocultural critic and full-time *chismoso*, accurately summarizes the many different functions of gossip as a cultural practice in the Latinx community. He argues that *chisme* is ancestral knowledge; it is how we pass on recipes, remedies, family history, legends, jokes, songs, and phrases.

Moreover, *chisme* also helps construct, preserve, and situate communities in the world by teaching new generations this ancestral and **antecedent knowledge**, or the things we already know.

As a genre, one of *chisme*’s main features is that it is primarily an oral tradition, which means that it can also be considered a “storytelling” genre. Not many of our ancestors had the privilege to learn to read and write,



Figure 2: Rubén's (@QueerXiChisme) Twitter thread on *chisme*.

especially in languages that have since been eradicated by colonization. As a substitute for documents and records, *chisme* was used as way to archive history and personal experiences. For example, if I ask my grandma for her Spanish rice recipe, she might start by describing her experience of learning how to cook this recipe. By recalling and situating herself in a particular moment, it helps her remember what is not written down. On the other hand, because many of these experiences and histories are not written down anywhere, they are often excluded from being recognized as real and significant.

Chisme has also been demonized and dismissed as a feminized practice, meaning that those stories told by your mom, grandma, aunts, cousins, and other women in the neighborhood, whether they are true or false, would be considered “idle talk.” The gossip among women, however, usually concerns issues on personal, familial, and cultural identity; and for this reason, I do not think it should be considered “idle” talk. Despite these setbacks, this genre is now starting to incorporate literate activities in genres like poems, memoirs, and narratives, thus making our ancestral knowledge and experiences more tangible, accessible, and valid.

More and more young people in the Latinx community are attending universities and bringing *chisme* to the academy, but that is not the only reason why the **distribution** of this genre is more widespread. Social media platforms also play a key role in determining where these texts go and who might receive them. As mentioned before, Rubén (@QueerXiChisme) uses Twitter to create dialogue and offers resources to learn more about the Latinx community, social justice issues, intersectionality, and *chisme*. Rubén also writes essays, makes and hosts podcasts, creates YouTube videos, and tours as a public speaker across university campuses. The various media used

Genre Conventions of <i>Chisme</i>				
Attention grabber or opening sentence	Usually a group activity	A way to share ancestral knowledge (stories, experiences, recipes, etc.).	Concerns issues surrounding personal, familial, and cultural identities.	Primarily an oral tradition that now incorporates literate activities (ex: poetry, tweets, videos) and various tools.

Figure 3: My summary of *chisme*'s genre conventions.

for producing and disseminating *chisme* helps distribute these issues more widely across different platforms.

Storytelling as Resistance and Survival

As previously mentioned, *chisme* or gossip is a popular means of transmitting vernacular histories for various communities of color because of its narrative form. Similarly, poetry as a literary genre also shares this narrative convention and is now used as a medium for Latinx writers to share their stories. Examining the poetry of Latinx writers like Melissa Lozada-Oliva, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Yesika Salgado, then, can help us understand how *chismes* or stories are reconfigured and recreated in a textual genre.

Melissa Lozada-Oliva, a poet and Master of Fine Arts candidate at New York University, explores the intersection of hair removal and her Latina identity in her poetry chapbook *Peluda* (Hairy). At the beginning of this collection, she recalls how her immigrant parents used to clean houses. Several years later, her mother remained a cleaning lady, but instead of cleaning houses, she cleaned bodies as a beautician who waxed hair for a living. Throughout the chapbook, she conflates her identity with her body hair: her bangs help shape her personality (“Ode to Brown Girls with Bangs”), her long last name sticks out like hair that needs to be waxed (“What If My Last Name Got a Bikini Wax, Too”), and most importantly, she considers her hair a family heirloom (“I Shave My Sister’s Back Before Prom”). Although her mom is a beautician, she resists cutting or waxing her body hair because she associates it with the erasure of her identity:

remember your body / the body—a land of feelings we’ve been
told to cut down / we rip the things we hate / about ourselves out
& hope / they grow back weaker / but hair is the only thing that

grows / the way things grow in the homeland / which is why we
 get goosebumps / when we hear Spanish words at the supermarket
 . . . the hair follicles click back to life. The buds shake themselves
 awake. They rise from the grave we insist on digging. The hair
 stands up. A million ancestors rooting for the home team. (“Mami
 Says Have You Been Crying,” 32–33).

In the last poem of the chapbook, “Yosra Strings Off My Mustache Two Days After the Election in a Harvard Square Bathroom,” she finally removes her mustache. Threading a mustache in a bathroom may seem like a completely normal and non-political task; however, she uses this small moment to speak out on the oppression of women and minorities, especially after the 2016 presidential election. In this poem, a Middle Eastern friend threads her mustache before she meets her date. She calls this moment an “emergency” but suggests that the bigger emergency is the uncertainty of their future and whether they can stay in America. Although threading her mustache to conceal her identity aches, it is a sacrifice she must make.

Melissa’s poems explore her roots, womanhood, and her experiences as a brown woman living in America. Reading this chapbook felt like stumbling upon someone else’s journal; it was intimate, funny, and for me, achingly familiar. The stories she shares aren’t meant to be universal, and because of this, her voice is set apart from the flood of voices that chant similar stories. But how does this book fit into *chisme* as a genre? For the most part, the stories, or *chisme*, Melissa tells are personal experiences shared in a conversational tone that make the reader feel like they’re listening to a friend. Throughout the chapbook, she suggests that her hair, which is often threatened of being cut off or removed, is a symbol of her cultural identity and is not something that can be entirely removed or forgotten. Since her experiences are written in print, they can easily be shared and validated by other people of color who also balance and resist the erasure of their cultural identity across different languages and contexts.

Like Melissa Lozada-Oliva, Elizabeth Acevedo also uses her hair to represent her identity and her ancestors. Acevedo is an Afro-Dominican author and performer who uses her platform to speak about issues such as police brutality and violence against women. In her spoken-word poem “Hair,” she begins by stating that her mother wants her to fix her hair. By “fixing,” her mom means that she wants her to lighten and straighten her dark, curly hair. Acevedo asks herself how she will fix this “ship-wrecked history of hair,” these “tresses held tight like African cousins in ship bellies.” She sees her curls as living ancestors, and to straighten them with a flat iron is equivalent to erasing them. She ends this poem by suggesting that her hair, and her refusal to fix something that isn’t broken, is a reclamation of her ancestry.



Figure 4: Screenshot of Elizabeth Acevedo's poem "Hair."

What makes this story unique is that it retains *chisme's* oldest genre convention: transmitting information through verbal speech. Although there is one transcription of this poem available online, the only way to access this poem is by watching Acevedo's recorded performance. Even these recorded performances on YouTube serve as documentation, which makes these stories and their history more accessible than they once were.

Storytelling as Therapy

In her poem "Molcajete," Yesika Salgado uses the preparation of a familiar meal to meditate on her failed romantic relationship. In this poem, she describes the process of making green salsa: "boil the tomatillos / boil the chiles / place them into the molcajete / with peeled garlic cloves / take the stone in your right hand / press it into the green" (38). She claims that this is the same process her mother used to show her love and devotion to her father. The narrator then asks herself which role she and her lover played. Was she the stone or the hand? She answers: "you were definitely the chile / you were the bite and the fire / you were the tears and the tortilla / I sat my heart before you. watched you eat. waited for you / to tell me it tasted like home, you didn't" (38). One deeply rooted belief throughout the Latinx community is that the way to a lover's heart is through their stomach. In other words, to show that you love a person, you should be able to prepare their favorite meals. However, in this poem the narrator is no longer preparing these meals, but recalling their preparation and their failure to get her lover to stay. I think this poem is evidence of how ancestral knowledge (such as recipes and beliefs) evolve to serve new purposes. In this instance, recalling



Figure 5: Yesika Salgado's chapbook "Corazon" and Melissa Lozada-Oliva's chapbook "Peluda."

this antecedent knowledge serves as a kind of therapy and meditation that helps the poet reconcile her loss. On the other hand, the poet's antecedent/ancestral knowledge about love and its connection to food has also failed to work in this context and suggests that there is a separation between the poet and her ancestors' knowledge.

Remediating *Chisme*

The poems of Melissa Oliva-Lozada, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Yesika Salgado can be considered a remediation, or a repurposing, of *chisme* and its conventions, such as sharing ancestral knowledge and focusing on issues concerning a cultural identity. The most important thing to note, however, is the various tools that are now used to produce *chisme*. When it was still an oral tradition, the only tool needed was our memory and verbal speech. Although those tools are still needed, the genre of *chisme* has expanded to include written texts, recorded performances, and translanguaging. Meaning that English is also a tool used to tell experiences from various languages and cultures.

Wait, What Is *Chisme* Again?

Chisme is more than its literal translation. It is how we participate in dialogue and share our stories. Sitting down to spill the tea is a time to discuss, deconstruct, challenge, criticize, and dissect ideas, issues, traumas, and histories. But most of all, it's a time to remind ourselves that who we are and what we have to say matters.

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Know the Language, Know the Culture, and Know the Bases (Basis) of Translingualism in KBO and MLB Baseball

Hye Hyon Kim

Hye Hyon Kim writes about code-switching between languages in the sport of baseball. She analyzes how certain baseball terms switch and change depending on where the sport is played. In comparing MLB to KBO (Korean Baseball Organization) League, Hye Hyon explains how differences in space and culture can influence how the game is constructed and how the sport is perceived within the fan culture. Hye Hyon distinguishes the difference in the terms and delves into how KBO has implemented some English terms such as *strike* and *bunt*, but also researches how KBO has created new terms to suit the sports culture in Korea.

It all began when my friends and I went to see a baseball game a couple of weeks ago, and being a huge fan of the Nexen Heroes in KBO (Korean Baseball Organization) League, I was excited to go see an MLB game for the first time. Curious and trying to find out more about the sports culture in the US, I texted my friend a day before going to St. Louis.

“Hey, would it be OK to wear my team’s jersey to the Cardinals’ game tomorrow?” I asked, as that is what many fans do in Korea. There are ten teams in the Korean baseball league, and oftentimes fans go to another team’s game wearing their own team’s shirt. So in a game between the Nexen Heroes and the Doosan Bears, for example, you will be able to see a lot of uniforms, such as fans wearing blue Samsung Lions jerseys or grey Hwanha Eagles shirts, or even someone wearing an LA Dodgers baseball cap. Wearing your team’s uniform, regardless of whether they are playing or not, is a fun way to dress and still cheer for your team, as it also becomes a sense of identity in where you stand in the league. I was going to an MLB game, but as I was a bigger fan of my home team, I asked my friend because I wanted to show off my burgundy jersey with sixteen signatures on it, all signed by meeting the players in person, thank you very much.



Figure 1: My friends and I at Busch Stadium.

“I don’t know about the jersey thing. I would say maybe not . . . ?” my friend replied and I shrugged it off and bought a Cardinals T-shirt the next day. If I couldn’t wear mine, I might as well buy one of the team’s, as a part of the experience. Turns out, it was a good thing that I bought one and became one with the crowd.

The Game and the Terms

Although I didn’t know the players, and I had never seen an MLB game before, it was easy enough to recognize what was going on. After all, baseball was a sport that originated from the U.S, and that had made its way across the world. Just like what I was used to seeing in KBO

League matches, whether that was on the field in Seoul or Gwangju, there were no surprises at St. Louis’s Busch Stadium. In any game, there are three bases, four including the home plate, and ten players on the field, nine in defense and one being the offence hitter. The point is to follow the ball, whether it is a hit or miss, literally. So, what was different? Surprisingly, many things.

The first thing I noticed was the terms and language of the rules in the game. Let me give you an example. When the pitcher throws four balls out of the strike zone, the hitter gets to go to the first base. While this is called a *walk* or *bases on balls* in the MLB, as the hitter walks to the first base without having to hit the ball, it is called *dead ball* in Japan, and in Korea, it is called 볼넷, which literally translates to *ball four*. This really fascinated me so I decided to look at other terms and see if I could identify a pattern of how the terms were translated or created in another language and culture.

Translingualism in Baseball

I think this is a good time to explain a term here, and that is **translingualism**, which is a fancy word describing how language is not stagnant but can be used in multiple ways across and within different languages. Su Yin Khor,

author of several *Grassroots* articles, illustrates the terms as “when we translingual our writing, we bring together two or more languages to make sense of something we might not have fully understood if we had only used one language” (155). Therefore, by using multiple languages we are able to understand a term or a concept in many layers. Have in mind that the understanding can come from and depends on the situation, setting, and even cultural resources. You can definitely see translingualism happening with the different patterns of terms used in both English and Korean baseball. What is fascinating is that although translingualism is easy to identify in situations where there are many different nationalities involved, translingualism is also possible in cases where one language is used. So it can even occur in one English classroom, when you make decisions on which vocabulary to use when you are talking to the professor, or whispering to your friends, or secretly passing a note, or presenting in front of the whole class. So, how is this related? In a lot of ways. Especially in sports, where in a game, each rule or action will be named somewhat similarly, or very differently, depending on where the sport is played.

Let me give you some examples. First, we have Exhibit A: English terms that are translated into Korean.

1. Translation from English to Korean

The first pattern I recognized was how a term could be translated. It wasn't a word-by-word translation, but there was definitely a resemblance of meaning that remained, even in Korean. A *single*, which is a hit that allows the batter to make it to the first base without being caught out, is called 1루타 (*base 1 hit*). Likewise, a *double* is 2루타 (*base 2 hit*), and a *triple* is 3루타 (*base 3 hit*). Another example would be *ground out*, which means that the hitter bats the ball so that it lands somewhere in the infield, which makes it easy to be caught and counted as an out. This is 땅볼 in Korean, meaning *ground ball*, so this is also easy to grasp. Similarly, a *sacrifice hit* is when the hitter bats the ball high and far across the field, which makes it easy to be caught by the outfielders and counted as an out but gives the chance to a runner to move to the next base or even to the home plate. This is a sacrifice hit and a 희생타 in Korean.

English Terms	Korean Terms	Translations
Single	1루타	Base 1 hit
Double	2루타	Base 2 hit
Triple	3루타	Base 3 hit
Ground out	땅볼	Ground ball
Sacrifice hit	희생타	Sacrifice hit

These are simple and straight forward in that in many cases, there wouldn't need to be some kind of extra explanation on what was going on. However, this is just the beginning. Let's look at other patterns: Exhibit B, when English terms are replaced with different English terms (in Korea).

2. English to Different English Terms

This one is interesting, because here the English terms of rules are now being transformed not to Korean, but to other English terms. The choice of terms and language are completely different, but technically, it is still in the same language.

Since it is still used as English, many will be able to recognize the word, however, with different terminology, people may not get the meaning right away. Calling a *walk* as *four ball* in the beginning of this article is a good example of this category. Let's look at some more.

When the batter succeeds in hitting the ball but it flies up high making it easier for the defense to catch it and count it as an out, in the MLB it is a *pop-up*. The same occurrence in Korea is called a *fly out*.

For these examples, there may need to be some kind of explanation, but there still doesn't seem to be much of a difference in what they entail in meaning. It also helps that the new terminology is still in English. Imagine going to a baseball game in Korea, and after making a trip to the bathroom, you ask your friend what happened. If they reply, "Oh it was *four ball*," or "It was a *fly out*," I assume you would still be able to nod your head and have some kind of understanding on what just happened. No? Well, how about this?

About an hour before the game starts, the teams announce the main players that will be on the field. What would this be called in MLB? *A batting order*. But would a *lineup* of players still make sense? I think you get the message.

Here is a table of the terms mentioned:

MLB English Terms	KBO English Terms
Walk	Ball four
Pop-up	Fly out
Batting order	Lineup

Last but not least, we have the most fascinating category, Exhibit C, where MLB English terms are in Korean, and translated in meaning like in the first category, but coined into completely new Korean terms.

3. English to Different Korean Terms

Things get a little complicated when the rules or the terms are now in Korean, and there isn't a direct correlation to MLB English terms. Instead, there are new meanings and connotations that are added that convey the Korean sports culture. For example, when the pitcher allows the offensive team to score, it is called an *earned run* in MLB. When the earned run numbers are counted and divided into the innings he has pitched out of the total innings, you get the ERA, which is the *earned run average*. This makes sense, as each pitcher has an ERA, and this is important because these numbers would become one of the prime factors of choosing the starting pitcher. I knew about this concept and, being a Korean baseball fan, I have also noticed there was an ERA for every pitcher, but I didn't know what it was or what the acronym stood for until I looked it up, because in Korea we use different terminology. *Earned run averages* or *earned runs* are called 평균자책점 and 자책점 in Korea. If we look at the translation, apart from 평균 which means *average*, *earned runs* and 자책점 mean something completely different. The way I interpreted *earned runs* was from the point of view of the hitter: He was able to score and earn runs whether that was because he was able to bat really well or there were bases on balls (*four balls*) and he was able to walk to the base. The term carries a positive connotation, because he earned something; he was able to earn points for his team to get closer to winning the game. However, the tables are turned when we look at the Korean term, 자책. If you take each letter and look at the meaning, 자 means *self* and 책 means *responsibility*. The letters together form the word 자책, and as a verb, 자책하다 means *to be taking the fault*, or taking the blame for something that they have done wrong as a mistake. There is also an emotional connotation that comes with the word, so the person may also feel guilty. So in Korea, we look at ERA as something of the pitcher's fault. They weren't able to throw in a way that could benefit the team, but gave the offensive team an opportunity to score. Interesting, huh?

On the other hand, there are also terms that have negative connotations in English that are not in Korean. An example would be *benchwarmers*. So, when the *lineup* (batting order! Haha, did you even notice? Ahhhh Translingualism!) of players is decided, it doesn't mean that just those nine hitters and one pitcher are getting ready. There are also other players who will still take part in training and are ready in their uniforms, but are watching the game in the dugouts, waiting to be called if there needs to be a substitute in case of an emergency, in case a player is injured, or there needs to be a change in the game of some sort. In MLB, they are called *reserved players* or *benchwarmers*. When I heard this term, it didn't take me long to understand where the term came from. Some of these players may be in

the dugouts, spending more time on a bench than on the field. *Benchwarming* or *benchwarmer* has a connotation here, too, but it is not positive, as the athlete is warming a seat rather than being on the field playing. But in Korea, they are called 대채선수 which directly translates to *substitute player*. No deeper meanings or layers there.

Let's look at another example. I think I can speak for many baseball fans when I say that one of the thrills of watching a game is when there are runners at each base and you wish the next hitter would hit a home run so all four runners can make it home. In MLB, this is called a *grand slam*. I didn't know this term, and it led me to do some research in effort to find out where this term originated. Turns out, it doesn't even come from athletics and it comes from cards! It is a term that was first used in card games and the history goes all the way back to 1814, meaning a "*complete success*" when the player is in the most desirable or ideal situation to gain points and win. It was only in 1953 that the term was used in baseball (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This is interesting to me, because there are no references to the baseball game itself, but this term is still used and every fan will not only know it, but hope for it, and may shout and yell it in a game. On the other hand, the term in Korean is 만루홈런, which can be translated to *full base home run*, when a home run is hit when all three bases are full. Very simple, yet clear description of what is happening, in both Korean and English.

One other thing I would like to point out, though, speaking of lineups and who starts pitching and who gets to warm the benches, is that the person in charge who makes all these important decisions is called as a *manager* in MLB. However, there are no managers in Korean baseball teams. The term *manager* certainly exists in Korea, but not in baseball or sports. *Manager* is an English word, but in the code of Korean culture, a manager would be someone who oversees and plans someone's (most likely someone very busy and famous) schedule and finances, like a personal secretary. So, if I may talk a little bit about Kpop here, every Kpop group will definitely have a manager, if not multiple within a group for every singer. A manager would be hired to schedule their events and appointments and follow them everywhere to check if they were OK and drive them to the place of the event. Returning to the topic of baseball, it can be understood how the term does not apply to baseball. The players would be responsible for their own well-being and they would not hire a separate person to take care of their schedule or oversee their personal lives. So, instead of the term *manager*, in KBO the person in charge of the team is called 감독, a *director*. If certain film directors come to your mind, then you are definitely on the right track. If you think about it, baseball can be seen like making a successful film. A director decides who

will be starring (playing) on the show (field) and how they should be acting (signaling how to bat or defend).

MLB English Terms	KBO Korean Terms	Meaning
ERA	평균자책점	Average fault score
Benchwarmer	대체선수	Substitute player
Grand slam	만루홈런	Full base home run
Manager	감독님	Director

Recap of Translingualism

We have looked at different terms, so let's recap how translingualism is actually being shown here. Well, the first pattern (going from English to Korean translations) is an example of how translingualism takes place between two languages.

Here we have two languages, and in a situation where a Chicago Cubs fan and a Nexen Heroes fan were to see a game together, when the first batter walks to the first base, the Cubs fan might be thinking *walk* while the Heroes fan may be thinking *ball four*. They would call it different names, but they would still be thinking of the same thing.

A fan may ask, "What's the lineup for today?" and the other would answer, "Oh, the batting order? Let me see." This is still translingualism because they are technically speaking in the same language but they are using different cultural terms. There is one language spoken, but what is implied in that language and how it is used is vastly different, and we can also call it translingualism because the language is transcending all the differences, allowing the speakers to still communicate.

But instead of thinking that this is impossible to communicate, think of it this way: Each country has a different language and culture, but they still share the same sport. One particular concept and how it is phrased isn't going to stop the game from happening. They will just continue to do so in a different language. Sure, baseball comes from America, but while it is still very foreign for Korean fans to go see an MLB game and recognize the terms, they will still be able to recognize the game and the rules. Also, let's not forget that baseball doesn't just exist in Korea and America. There is also LMB (Liga Mexicana de Béisbol, the Mexican baseball league), NPB (Nippon Professional Baseball, the Japanese baseball league), CPBL (Chinese Professional Baseball League), and more, and I am sure there are going to

be different names and titles for rules there too. So here it is, translingualism happening in just a different culture and setting!

Code-Switching

We've looked at how there are different terminologies for baseball. If you are a baseball fan like me, it is easy to memorize them and use them to explain baseball to another fan or they may naturally come to mind when you see a pop-up or an earned run. But what if you were talking to someone who wasn't a baseball fan and said, "Hey, did you see that pop-up? That was a bad hit, but a great catch!" They may look at you and wonder if you were referring to a pop or a soda.

What is going on? What can we call this? There are **codes** in every language. Here, it would be described as one person speaking in the code of baseball, and the other not. If there is a mix-up of codes in a conversation, there may be confusion. But let's change the situation to the classroom. Again, we wouldn't necessarily say the word *steal* or *hit* in a classroom, because those terms have different connotations. The way in which there are different words designated for different settings is how we recognize that there are different codes in different literate activities, and we switch codes to make ourselves fit in with the setting.

Code-switching does not just happen with verbal language, however; it also affects us in how we choose to act and how we use certain body language. Let's move on to the fan culture of baseball and how it is different in the US and Korea.

Fan Culture and Translingualism

Going back to my Nexen Heroes jersey with sixteen signatures, I am glad that I had asked my friend if I could wear it to the Cardinals game before actually going, because as soon as I was near Busch Stadium, I could clearly see that everyone was either a Cardinals fan or not. Not only was the stadium gigantic, but there was Ball Park Village, full of restaurants, bars, and shops that had Cardinals all over the place including the fans wearing their jerseys. It was actually hard to find a fan not wearing a jersey. There was even a Cardinals museum. This was all really cool, and it almost seemed like I was experiencing the sport of baseball all over again, with new eyes. But what fascinated me was how everything came with a price. Literally. You needed a ticket to see an exhibit, you needed to pay and sign up to get a signature from



Figure 2: Cardinal Nation.

a player, and even though jerseys cost over 100 dollars, almost everyone was wearing one. The players were like celebrities, you could buy a jersey with their name on it, but to get a signed shirt or even to ask for a signature was almost impossible.

The reason why I am surprised was because I am used to a very different fan culture in Korea. Have I mentioned my jersey yet? Not only can you meet the players after the game, but the fan culture of Korean baseball is built upon the idea that the teams are able to play because of the fans' support. Many players will gladly greet you and talk to you, and they will sign your baseball or jersey by request, and they might even thank you for buying one in their name. They are famous, but they are expected to be friendly and respect the fans, too, as the fans would for them. So how do fans use their language toward the team and its players? I did some research on online forums and articles from the sports sections of newspapers to look at the terms and code usage of the fans. While I am not sure about the Cardinals or the Cubs, the Nexen Heroes have some nicknames that the team usually goes by. Nexen is a relatively new team based in Seoul and was first established in 2008 (Homeplate). As it is a young team compared to others which were founded more than thirty years ago, the team is known to have younger players who each have strong strengths in pitching, batting, catching, and defense. Each player is known for their talent and fans came up with the term *Nexvengers*, combining the two terms *Nexen* and *Avengers*.

This is fun, but let's take the translingualism aspect in to this again. What happens when we make nicknames for players? Well, there used to be a hitter, Michael Choice, who signed with Nexen in July 2017 to be the cleanup hitter (known for their home runs), and in showing joy for the new player, many fans begin to call him, 선택형 which translates to *brother of choice*, or even 굿초이스, a *good choice*, making a pun in both English and Korean. Another well-known player, Byung Ho Park (who used to play for the Minnesota Twins), is also a cleanup hitter and has been doing incredibly each season, known for batting over forty home runs for three consecutive seasons. Fans love this player so much, and as he is known for his hits, his nickname is 박뱅, *Park Bang*, meaning his bat explodes with points and that he scores whenever he is at bat. You can see how the Heroes shop sells jerseys with Park's nickname in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Nexen Heroes Shop No. 52, Park Bang Jersey.

So here it is, translingualism, in the code of sports, specifically in baseball. If you think about it, translingualism is everywhere. Even in one language, you are consciously making choices and decisions on which terms and words you use depending on where you are and who you are with. Language and literate activities are powerful in that the choice of words you make not only says a lot about who you are, but they also empower your identity within a community.

I remember leaving Busch Stadium thinking how I had just experienced another code of baseball, making notes on how some terms were similar but also different. It also dawned on me that this one single experience shouldn't be generalized to other MLB games or fans. However, I did learn something about MLB, and it was definitely a fun experience. One takeaway that I do want to finish with is the importance of differences: whether that is in a language, in a sport, or even in communication. These can be called codes and just like it is perfectly OK to accept and embrace every part of your identity, be proud of your codes, as they are a big part of you, and at the end of the day, they are what makes you, well, you.

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“Are You There?": Exploring What It Means to Be a Part of the Kpop Discourse Community

Katy Lewis

In this article, Katy Lewis explores what it's like to be a part of the American Kpop discourse community. She thinks through the different genres she encounters and the different literate activities she participates in and how they ultimately affect the way she sees and understands the world differently because of her experiences.

Simply put, I am a music fiend. Like . . . I absolutely LOVE music. And, sure, there are people who say they “love” music, and other people roll their eyes at them. (You know exactly who I’m talking about, too, I bet.) But, me, I really do love it. I was raised on Motown and beach music along with '90s country, with my discovery of the Backstreet Boys randomly thrown in. So, my music tastes have always been sort of a jumble, but it’s because I think music is amazing and fantastic. And I’ve never been one to shy away from listening to something new.

So, when I scrolled through YouTube in November 2015 and noticed a new video from The Try Guys (who were then producing videos under BuzzFeed) that featured music, I was definitely intrigued. In this series, Eugene, who is Korean, was introducing the other Try Guys to Korean culture in a series of five videos:

The Try Guys Watch K-pop For The First Time • K-pop: Part 1

The Try Guys Try K-pop Idol Makeup • K-pop: Part 2

The Try Guys Try Korean Cooking • K-pop: Part 3

The Try Guys Recreate Korean Drama Scenes • K-pop: Part 4

The Try Guys Try K-pop Dance Moves • K-pop: Finale

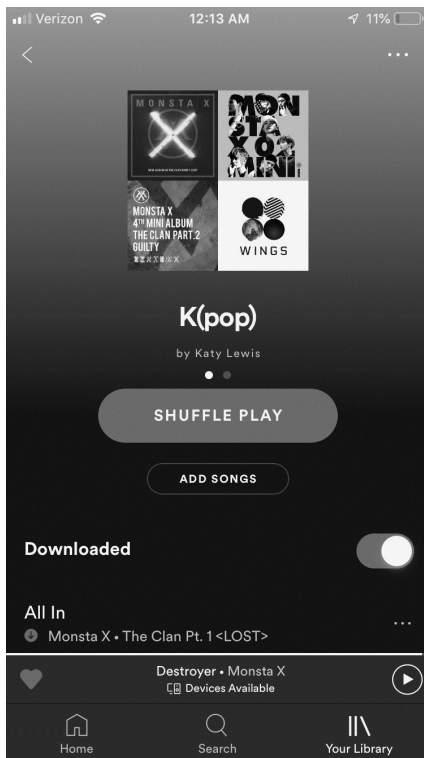


Figure 1: Here's my running playlist of all the Kpop songs I like.

And . . . I was enthralled! I've always been interested in food and culture and just generally wanting to know more about the world around me, so the video series was definitely something I'd be interested in. So, I watched the whole thing (of course), and this one song just kept playing in my head over and over again—BIGBANG's "Bang Bang Bang." And . . . I watched the YouTube video on repeat. (These were before my glorious days of Spotify Premium . . . but I soon fixed that. Feel free to check out my playlist featured in Figure 1, which includes all of the Kpop songs that I think are great—currently up to almost 900 songs!) Then, another one of their songs—"Fantastic Baby"—appeared in the queue. And, of course . . . I listened to it on repeat. And, also of course, I told my best friend all about it. And the following summer of 2016, she asked me to remind her of the songs that we had listened to . . . and that's how I became obsessed with Kpop.

Wait. Is That Like . . . BTS? Or Psy?

Kpop is more than just Psy's "Gangnam Style" (popularized in 2012 with the "horse" dance) and BTS (a world-renowned Kpop group, recently nominated for a Grammy for the artwork on the cover of their most recent album). And, while I feel like it's a pretty obvious thing to say, Kpop, just like American pop music, has a variety of subgenres, groups, and concepts.

I think Kpop fans get a bad rap because they are pretty fanatical and intense (which I'd prefer to say instead of crazy because crazy reinforces all kinds of things I'm not comfortable with). And, certainly, BTS's ARMY (also known as A.R.M.Y., which stands for Adorable Representative MC for Youth) has been super popular on social media for supporting BTS all across the world. But I think stopping there and just writing all Kpop fans

off as problematic or a group of childish fangirls is not OK. So, that’s why I’m writing this article. To better understand (and maybe even explain) what it’s like to be a part of the American Kpop community. Because it’s not just about picking a bias (more on this later!) or buying concert tickets or collecting albums and photocards. There’s a whole bunch to unpack, so let’s start by thinking about where we’re going in this article. My main goals are to

- Introduce you to Kpop and its surrounding genres and literate activities
- Investigate how American Kpop fans work as a discourse community
- Discuss how being a part of a Kpop discourse community impacts the way I think about other things in the world

Discussing Discourse Communities

So, in 1990, David Swales set out to define the concept of **discourse community**, an idea that I’ll be working with throughout the rest of this article. In particular, Swales was interested in “*how* a particular discourse community uses its discursal conventions to initiate new members” and, even, “*how* the discourse of another reifies particular values or beliefs” (468–469, emphasis in original). Basically, Swales was trying to understand how discourse communities get people involved in their community and how the discourse of that particular community (i.e., the way they talk or write about things) contributes to how they see and understand the world around them. Swales then outlined “six defining characteristics” that he said “will be necessary and sufficient for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community” (471). These were the things that he saw as common across all discourse communities and what ultimately made a discourse community separate from a speech community (which isn’t really important right now but just so you know for future reference). Below are the six characteristics that Swales identifies:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community has its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.

4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some special lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise. (471–473)

What do these all mean, though, and why are they important for thinking about a group of fans of a really specific kind of music? Well, I think understanding how being in a certain discourse community affects all of your other experiences, especially experiences of other genres and literate activities, is a really important part of being a writing researcher. And, since that's what our program focuses on, I wanted to take time to understand how this music genre that I love so much is more than just an appreciation for music. There are ways that being a part of this discourse community has made me think about my life, who I am as a person, and how my behaviors and personality can impact the world. Not to, like, be melodramatic, but it has.

Being in the Know

One of the things that is really interesting about being an international, American Kpop fan is how there's this super specific way of talking about Kpop, groups, and fandom that, if you don't understand what it means, makes it really hard for you to interact with the community. So, let's try an experiment really quick. I'll write something out down below and let's see if you can figure out what I'm saying.

So, I love Monsta X. They are probably my all-time favorite group. My bias is Wonho, but I think my bias wrecker is Jooheon. (And, I know, Wonho is a visual, and he works out a lot. But he's my bias for more reasons than just being an adorable cutie. He always makes the best songs that make my heart feel really warm and squishy. So, come at me.) Anyway. Monsta X just has such different skills and different knowledge that they bring to the group. Wonho is just fantastic at producing, and Jooheon's got great lyrics. I think Monsta X really stands out for their concepts, too. They're kind of intellectual, more mature, maybe? Like, there are layers to their music, and they're not just performing music produced by random people. It's music from themselves for Monbebe, which just makes my heart really warm. And I'm still

a little mad at myself that I didn't get the lightstick because that would have been really awesome. But I'm saving up for it and the next album they release because I have no self-control when it comes to collecting things.

So. Could you figure out what I was saying here? Probably? Maybe? Well, the point is that, even if you knew what the words meant in normal, everyday conversation, they take on a different meaning amongst the Kpop community. Like Swales says of discourse communities, the Kpop community “has acquired some special lexis” (473). So, if you're trying to figure out what all I said, here's some helpful info:

- When you're talking about performers in Kpop, you call them *idols*. Idols can be *soloists* (idols on their own), *groups*, and *bands* (people who actually play instruments, not just sing, dance, etc. I personally recommend DAY6 and The Rose. Very good music.).
- There's a range of groups: normally, they're all boys or all girls, but there have been some coed groups (KARD is one of my current favorites!).
- Groups can also range in size, from three or four members all the way up to thirteen, fourteen, or even fifteen. Honestly, there have been some that have had even more!
- Idol groups also sometimes have *subunits*, where members from the larger group perform in smaller combinations (like two or three members). Subunits can be formed across groups (so, idols across different groups from the same entertainment company) or, even, across entertainment companies (so, idols from different groups and different entertainment companies coming together to release music). And, even though they're part of a larger group, it's completely normal for idols to go solo and release songs or even whole albums, even while still being part of that group.
- Idols work and train under entertainment companies, which range in size (from how many groups they have along with how much money they have to invest in trainees). Before debuting (i.e., performing publicly and releasing official music for the first time), idols are called *trainees* and are very limited in what they are allowed to do and where they are allowed to go.

The Kpop community uses *so many special words*, designated specifically for the Kpop context, and not knowing them—especially when you're just getting into Kpop—can be confusing and, honestly, even alienating. If I were

to make an official *Kpop Glossary* (which, btw, there are online resources that help out with this), I'd probably include these words:

Company

Bias

Bias wrecker

Fan chant

Comeback

Rookie

Generations (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.)

Photocard

Position—leader, visual, vocal, dancer, rapper

Idol

Trainee

Group (not band!)

I could write pages and pages about all of the specific words that we use when talking about Kpop, but that feeling you have right now, of not knowing what those words are? That's an important way for us to think about how our emotions and our feelings—including our frustrations!—affect our **uptake**, the ways that we take on new information (both knowingly and unknowingly) in a variety of situations.

Because this discourse community relies so heavily on these terms that, for the most part, are defined the same by everyone (in the American Kpop community, at least), knowing that your uptake is being affected because you don't know them and feel the pressure to know them is HUGE. So, I'll include some definitions for these terms in a sort-of glossary at the end of this article (happy reading!). The others? You'll have to find out on your own. And, trust me, you'll need to go look them up 'cause I'm going to keep using them. *inserts evil emoji here*

Anyway, uptake is really interesting to think about here because it's more than just taking one idea or knowing how to write in one genre and applying it to another situation. Uptake happens all the time, whether we know it or not, and discourse communities really do influence our uptake and the way we see the world especially because, as Swales points out, any

discourse community “has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members” (471). Kpop fans are constantly communicating with each other (and the world) in a variety of ways and through a variety of genres, with social media, of course, being a way for fans to interact with each other and their fave groups. So, in the next section we’ll talk a little about the kinds of genres that Kpop fans use.

“Intercommunication” and the Genres of Kpop Fandom

Certainly, the whole point of a community is to talk about things, and Kpop fans are always doing that. Popular platforms for communication include Tumblr, a popular site for fandoms; Twitter; YouTube; and Instagram. Many Kpop groups and idols have accounts across these platforms, while lots of fans create fan accounts dedicated to sharing pictures and videos of performances; discussing Kpop idols’ fashion and clothing; and translating Korean into a variety of languages so that international fans can access what everyone’s saying.

Moreover, Swales points to how “a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims” (472). But these platforms aren’t genres themselves since there are so many different kinds of literate activities happening on these platforms. YouTube videos are certainly an **umbrella genre** (that is, a larger category of literate activity that lots of other genres fall under) that can help expose international fans to Kpop. Like many musical artists, lots of Kpop groups maintain a YouTube account, where they post teasers, comeback information, music videos, and dance practice videos. Alongside this, fans often use YouTube to support their favorite idols or create funny content as an expression of their appreciation for the hard work of these idols. And fans will often make YouTube compilations of favorite songs or favorite performances, while other videos might challenge viewers to guess the correct Kpop song in a number of seconds or see how many second generation songs they know (versus first or third generation songs, for instance). Fans also interact with Kpop through reactions to music videos or comebacks, while also posting content about unboxing albums (where they show you what the album looks like and what’s included, such as photocards and other goodies).

While these are all examples of the intercommunication that Swales was talking about, they certainly serve different purposes. For instance, videos where you can quiz your knowledge of Kpop from different generations of idols help us think more about the sixth observation that Swales makes about

discourse communities: “A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise” (473). Here, Swales means that some members of a discourse community might know a lot (i.e., people who have been listening to Kpop for a long time know a lot about different groups, idols, and/or songs) while others are still learning. Swales notes that this is because “Discourse communities have changing memberships; individuals enter as apprentices and leave by death or in other less involuntary ways. However, survival of the community depends on a reasonable ratio between novices and experts” (473). And, yeah, reading that certainly sounds dramatic, so please know that I’m not trying to say Kpop is a life or death sort of thing. Instead, I want you to pay attention to the fact that people enter and leave the communities for varying reasons and at varying rates, and there are always going to be people producing genres and communicating with them in order to fill in the knowledge gaps that new members of the community might have.

Even though YouTube provides a space where Kpop, Kpop idols, and Kpop fans can reach a wide variety of audiences, these different genres provide different kinds of information and interactions, allowing the community to change, grow, expand, discuss, etc. As Swales notes, “a discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback” (472). These participatory mechanisms are key to how Kpop fans interact with Kpop, including the music and the artists, because, in my experience, Kpop is especially effective when groups and idols continually establish and reinforce their relationship with their fans. And there are a variety of literate activities that American Kpop fans value and use to reinforce the relationship between themselves and their groups. One major way that fans and groups can do this is through the Korean app V LIVE, where fans can “discover live videos of your favorite star!” (“About V LIVE”). The site says that “you can interact with your stars in real time around the world” and “you will get to know them better” (“About V LIVE”). On this platform, Kpop idols often go live, read fan comments, and speak directly to fans, as well as post specially produced videos or shows only available on V LIVE. Fans have the ability to add subtitles in their own languages, increasing interactions and opportunities for interactions with everyone. By participating in these aspects of Kpop culture, Kpop fans and Kpop idols continue to build their unique discourse community.

Even the lexis of Kpop helps do this: Kpop groups and idols tend to have special names for their fans (Monbebe, VIP, Universe, and Inner Circle are some that I personally identify with). Kpop fans participate in fan chants during performances. And then there are also the physical objects that come with being a Kpop fan, including using lightsticks during concerts, collecting

albums and photocards, and making goodies for concerts. Speaking of which . . .

The Ultimate Kpop Literate Activity??

(OK. That may have been a sudden transition. Bear with me.) I know you might not consider concerts to be a genre, but I want to encourage you to appreciate them for the hugely complicated literate activity that they are. Certainly, there are so many genres used to put on a Kpop concert (or any concert for that matter), but where do the fans come in?

Whether you’ve been to one concert or a million, the thing that makes American Kpop concerts really special for Kpop fans is that it means they’re actually getting to see their favorite idol here, physically, in the US, rather than through a (relatively) small screen. These concerts often come with opportunities to meet their favorite idols, with perks like hi-touch (when you get to say hello and high five the group, which usually lasts for, like, five seconds); group photos; fan signs (where you can talk to the group and have them sign notes or albums); or send offs at the end of the show. But securing these tickets is . . . hard. Most of the venues are fairly small, and tickets are always expensive. Just think of all the things they have to do in order to prepare for a large group of people to travel, prepare for a performance, and actually complete the performance to the standards that everyone has . . . and to do it internationally.

I’m one of the lucky ones. I’ve been able to go to eleven concerts since 2016. (Don’t give me that look. I’m good at budgeting. Sort of. I also have a best friend who goes with me on the trips, so they’re less expensive.) I mentioned before that becoming a part of the Kpop discourse community involves special terms, and I also pointed out that there’s also a pressure (often unspoken) to learn those terms.¹ That means that, if “a discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise” (Swales 473), then we can’t ignore how one of the first questions other fans ask each other is, “How long have you been listening to Kpop?” or “When did you get into Kpop?” Sometimes it’s a way to bond, and sometimes it’s a way of proving yourself.

In fact, relaying your history and how you got into Kpop has been a part of every Kpop concert I have ever been to, and it often comes up when you’re waiting outside the concert venue in order to get into the show. In

1. And, honestly, sort of live them. Like, use them so much that they’re just a part of your daily vocabulary. Language is so interesting.

2016, for instance, when my friend and I saw CL in Los Angeles, we met three people, sharing our stories of how we got into Kpop, discussing how this was me and my best friend's first Kpop concert, and listening to other concert experiences they shared. They also gave advice on where to go to buy Kpop albums because they're difficult to find in America since they have to be imported.

And Kpop concerts also provide interesting opportunities for those “participatory mechanisms primarily [working] to provide information and feedback” to those who are a part of that feedback loop (Swales 473). Kpop artists often perform all across the world—obviously in Korea, but also in Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and so forth—and, while they do come to the US, broader international tours (to South America and Europe) are rare (even though they're becoming increasingly more common).

Does this make this the ultimate literate activity for Kpop fans, since it's usually the only chance they get to appreciate their groups' music live? And what about all of the genres that Kpop fans make for the concerts: headbands with their bias's name written on; light up signs; posters; notes; banners to be held up during specific songs; photocards to pass out before the concert; fan projects to create a rainbow of lightsticks across the venue during the encore? In many ways, it's the opportunity that all Kpop fans wait for—the moment to show their idols that their music is meaningful and impactful and so, so appreciated.

Thinking about Language, Translingualism, and How We Communicate

As I've explored throughout this article, being a Kpop fan and being a part of this community has had a huge impact on my life. And all of the literate activities in this discourse community reach across countries, time zones, and languages to connect people from all over the world. With that said, though, as an American, I can really only speak to the American experience. And I'm speaking to a very specific American experience. All of this becomes even more interesting when thinking about how Kpop works as an international phenomenon. So, certainly, Korean fans have totally different experiences than American fans who have totally different experiences than Brazilian fans. (So, don't think that my experience is the best one or the right one or anything like that. Do some digging before you decide what's right, and don't just take my word for it.) We have to pay attention to these differences because of the fact that Kpop is primarily in Korean and because of its international

reach. While the thing that brings many Kpop fans together is the love of the music and their fave groups, language, culture, identity, social issues—all of these get wrapped up in our experiences, making this conversation much more complicated than simply liking a song and bopping along to it in your car even though you’re not sure you’re singing the right syllables because you don’t know Korean and your mouth isn’t used to making those consonants. (No? Just me? Cool . . .)

Being a part of this community has made me reflect on how I use language and how I understand other languages. I certainly have a great appreciation for translations now, much more than I had before. That also means that I’m more aware of how communicating in different languages involves negotiation, something we talk about in our program when we discuss **translingualism**, a way of understanding how speakers and writers use languages in different ways for different purposes across different genres in ways that are fluid and ever-changing. As Learning Outcome #9 states, translingualism helps us think about “the nature of language as a life-shaping force” (“Learning Outcomes”). I don’t know if I would have been willing to admit this before I started listening to music in a language that isn’t my native language, but I definitely wasn’t thinking about how English surrounds me all the time and that I generally didn’t (and still don’t) find myself in situations where I have difficulty communicating or using language.

With Kpop (and, later, Korean dramas as well as Korean food and recipes), I had to learn all sort of new ways of learning about and interacting with genres that I could tell were really important to this community. I became more comfortable with finding information myself. For instance, some videos weren’t always translated immediately into English, so I either watched them without the subtitles or tried to listen along and find words I understood. One time the only translation was in Spanish, so I tried my best to remember what I had learned in my past Spanish classes to understand the video. I’m learning Korean, too, first trying to at least know the writing system so I could translate things myself if auto-translate through Google doesn’t work. (Hint: It often doesn’t and creates very weird captions. Don’t just trust an automatic translation. Do a little research to be sure!) This experience has also just made me more generally aware of all of the languages existing around me all the time, not just English. I pay more attention to signs and menus and comments on Twitter and posts from my friends that incorporate other languages.

All of this is to say that even though Swales says discourse communities are about having a specified goal and specified ways of reaching a goal, I know from personal experience that discourse communities open you to

new ways of seeing and using genres, language, and literate activity. And I wouldn't change that for the world.

정말 감사합니다.

Some Words You Should Know

Bias

This person is your favorite from the group. Maybe you like them best because of their style or their voice. Maybe their dance moves are the best in your eyes . . . or you just think they're really, really cute. Regardless, your bias is the person you look at the most, the one who always catches your attention.

Bias Wrecker

This person is the person who, as I have said to my friends before, makes you swerve out of your lane, so to speak. They essentially make you stop paying attention to your bias (whether that's for a moment, for a month, or forever . . .).

Photocard

Think collectible cards, like Pokemon cards or baseball cards. I would go as far to say that all albums come with at least one photocard, and many albums now contain multiple photocards, with pre-ordered albums receiving an extra, pre-order exclusive photocard. They're completely randomized and come in lots of different versions. For one album I got not too long ago, there are fifty-two different photocards you can get. That's a lot of albums to buy if you're trying to collect them all . . .

Position—leader, visual, vocal, dancer, rapper

Like sports, every member of a Kpop group has a very special job to do within their group. The leader is just that—the leader of the group; they're typically the person who knows most about the Kpop industry or music production, and they'll often speak for the group at awards show or during interviews, for instance. The visual is the member who is designated the most attractive member; they'll often sport the most interesting fashion choices, and their job, simply put, is to look fantastic. Vocals are the singers of the group: they're job is to sing really well, which differs from rappers, who primarily rap. (While singers and rappers can sometimes do both, they

typically stick to what they were primarily trained for.) Dancers are pretty self-explanatory—they’re the best at dancing and can often be in charge of choreography or can be found as the focus of the choreography.

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Katy Lewis can't believe she's a third-year PhD student, but here she is. She makes her return to the *Journal* for the first time since 2016 when she wrote an article about note-taking. As you can probably tell, she loves to listen to music and go to concerts, but she also enjoys adventuring with friends, eating food, and finding all of the little bits of happiness that she can.

The Appalachian Trail: How to Keep your Memories After

Jacob Hopper

In this article, Hopper explores the great outdoors and examines how journaling is an awesome way to keep your memories after the trail ends. He also writes about journaling through the lens of CHAT, and how journaling is an uptake genre, as well as the health benefits of journaling.

Most of my friends have an affectionate nickname for me: Grandpa. I think it's probably because I really enjoy going to bed at a reasonable time, I'm always yelling at the rotten kids to stay off my apartment welcome mat, and I have an appreciation for the nostalgic. This last part is why I think I enjoy journaling so much. It takes me back to a simpler time—no technology but rather just myself and my thoughts. Journaling is in itself a genre of writing and one I am definitely going to implement when I take to the Appalachian Trail this summer. It will capture memories in a completely different way than pictures and will be something that I will keep with me for the sake of my future children and grandchildren to read someday. Journaling is also a tool you can use to help better understand the concept of an **uptake genre**. In our history and culture that has seemingly become so hectic, journaling can be a source of stress relief for college students.

Uptake

Before getting into the meat of this article, I'd like to take a paragraph or two to explain uptake and how journaling can be considered an uptake genre. According to isuwriting.org, "Uptake is the process we go through to take up a new idea and think about it until it makes sense." You may have learned in your high school classes how to write different types of papers (i.e. research papers, five-paragraph essays, and the like). However, no one sat you down and said, "This is the proper way to journal," because everyone's journal is a personal creation. To start journaling, you are taking experiences, emotions, and random tangents and creating your own style of journal.

Journaling as an uptake genre, then, is how you are putting into words what you've experienced. An example of my journal beginnings is provided later. I began to write down my thoughts and what was important to me in my life at the time. Keeping track of all these various improvements during my life has allowed me to track how I have grown as a person. It really is a great tool to help articulate abstract things like emotions, but it also helps you organize your thoughts, and *gives you more freedom to write without "rules" of conventional papers*. This last part is **KEY** to your success in college and life. As you go higher in education, the five-paragraph essay and its structure will be replaced by writing projects that you have no idea where to begin because the instructions are not clear cut or you've never written in that type of genre or style before.

Hitting the Trails

Pope Paul VI said that people listen to witnesses more than teachers and to teachers only if they are witnesses. My humble beginnings as a college student who decided to journal is not a cliché story about doodling and pouring my heart out to "Dear Journal," but rather is a story about a young college freshman who was pretty apprehensive at first because his only friends who journaled were girls. I originally started journaling as a way to collect my thoughts, especially during prayer time, because journaling was a way for me to see what mattered to me during my freshman year versus what matters now, two years later. Journaling has shown the growth and strides that I've made as a writer and as a person in regard to how I organize my thoughts and what is important to me (this is how I have used journaling as "uptake"). As mentioned in the beginning of this article, my nickname is Grandpa, so forgive me if I age myself here, but I really enjoy reading books, especially those about Christian spirituality, and I have found that a great

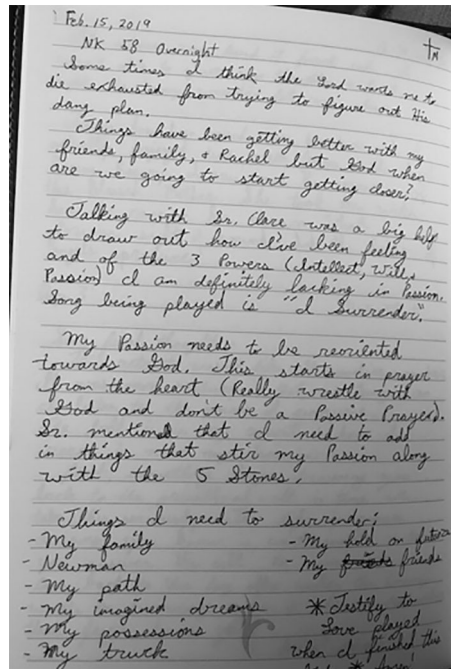


Figure 1. Picture of my prayer journal

way to process these is to actually write down how I interpret them. Now how does this relate to the Appalachian Trail or journaling as a genre?

For all of my camping friends out there, the trail is a great time to just get lost in nature. There will be, undoubtedly, many challenges out there, and journaling will serve as a format to write down your various experiences and how you coped with them. It will also be a great way to write down all the things that pop into your head when you're just out walking in nature alone and you let your mind wander. Throughout the trip, you might even learn something about yourself and you can write that down and take it back to civilization with you.

I am going to be hitting the trail this summer with my dad (also an old man like myself) and I hope to journal everyday about what has happened that day, where we went, that sort of thing. Journaling will help me keep my memories organized and if something spectacular happens, I can't tweet it out because, well, I'll be in the mountains. Being able to journal will also be a great way to unwind by the fire from a long day of trekking; nice quiet time is so hard to find these days with the constant cacophony of sounds that we are bombarded with in our day-to-day lives.

I think that we all long for at least a sliver of a simpler time. Journaling allows you that time to put yourself into your writing and the journal is your voice, not the rubric of a teacher. We are in an age of social media prominence, so people very much enjoy the anonymity of hiding behind a user name. They can rant and rave all they want on their “Finstas,” but journaling is you: heart and soul, the good and the bad. It is a way to write about our everyday lives and doesn’t just have to be in the great outdoors. Writing about your day, something that happened in class, or a really good conversation with a friend are just a few topics that could be in a journal. I find it really enjoyable to write about the positive impacts that have been made throughout the day, because it helps refocus my mind and remind myself that the world isn’t burning down. Our lives can be very stressful and journaling has a lot of really great benefits in the realm of mental health.

I’ve talked a lot about all the great benefits of journaling in regards to improving your writing prowess, but allow me to point out the medical benefits as well (English class can be very multifaceted). Some people may be hesitant about journaling because of their antecedent knowledge of the topic. For instance, when I was younger, only girls would journal, and so my antecedent knowledge of journaling was mistaken as something feminine. However, I want to put forth a different side of journaling and how it works as an uptake genre in regards to mental health. All of the information that will now be presented is from the University of Rochester Medical Center. I can guarantee that most of you are stressed out because—I’m no doctor and don’t play one on TV—but I am a fellow college student and know all the stressors placed on us throughout our four years on this hallowed quad, and I can speak from my own experiences, too.

Health Benefits

The URMC offers three thoughts about where journaling can help: manage anxiety, reduce stress, and cope with depression. I totally agree with them there. Whenever school or life gets to be too much, journaling is a really great way to let it all out on the paper and you don’t have to be an amazing writer because journaling is just for you. It is a composition for one and I think that’s part of the beauty of it: anyone can journal. You can be brutally honest with what is going on in your day, and you can keep it simple with all that you jot down because you probably aren’t going to publish your deepest, darkest secrets.

With every school project, you learn something and this one is no different. While reviewing the URMC, I found a great example of journaling

as uptake. “Journaling helps control your symptoms and improve your mood by: Tracking any symptoms day-to-day so that you can recognize triggers and learn ways to better control them” (URMC). I think that this is one of the best benefits of journaling. Uptake genres are all about using various experiences and being able to articulate them. If you can recognize things before they are going to happen because you’ve been tracking them through the uptake of your journal, then they become that much easier to prevent or avoid. Journaling then becomes a double whammy; you can get your creative juices flowing and become a better writer all while de-stressing and improving your mental health! All in all, journaling helps you feel more in control, and even if your day goes south (which would probably be warmer than the weather here in Central Illinois, so not that bad), then you have an outlet where you can put all the highs and lows of the day. Always remember, you’re too blessed to be stressed.

CHAT It Up

People may not believe that journaling is a genre of writing but by channeling Joyce Walker’s article, “Just CHATting,” we are going to see just how journaling is a unique uptake genre. For those freshmen who have no idea what CHAT is, or if you’ve never taken an English class at ISU, it stands for cultural-historical activity theory. Essentially, CHAT, as it’s used at ISU, is a way of looking at a particular composition, examining how it affects its audience and the impact it will have as a piece of writing. CHAT is a concept that can be applied to more than just your homework. Being familiar with the different components of ISU CHAT will help you in many aspects of your life. You can look at a business proposal and analyze it and CHAT helps you figure out 1) what the proposal is, 2) what are some ways to accomplish the task, and 3) what are the repercussions or challenges that will be presented along the way. CHAT will also take place in your mind before you even begin writing. Once you are given an assignment, your thoughts will start to put pen to paper in your mind and a lot of ideas will begin to spring up. This makes CHAT useful for so much more than just your English classes.

There are 7 key parts of ISU CHAT: **production, representation, reception, distribution, socialization, ecology, and activity**. I would like to focus specifically on how **production, socialization, and ecology** work together in the journal genre.

Production for journaling can be a very different experience for each writer. Walker describes it as, “All the aspects that went into creating the text.

These can include tools, practices, materials, and other related elements” (Walker 74). Journaling needs only two things: a journal and a writing utensil. Everything else you would like to add is completely up to you. I have many friends who are amazing artists and they doodle (well, they call it a doodle, I call it a work of art) and this adds color and another dimension of their personality on the pages. Another tool I use is writing in cursive. I think it is an elegant form of writing and it’s simple, yet no one does it anymore. That is one way I put myself onto the page, but, as you can see, the possibilities are really wide open for the production of your journal. Production is also going to be influenced by the experiences that you have (the main reason you are journaling in the first place). Without this next part of ISU CHAT, your production wouldn’t have much meat on its bones.

Socialization is an interesting part of ISU CHAT and journaling. This genre is for an audience of one, as I mentioned earlier. However, even though a journal may only have an audience of one, that person understands their writing as part of their experience in the world, with genres, and tools, and other people. The way they understand what a journal is for, the way they write in it, and even what they write about (their emotions and activities) is all based on their experience in the world. This is socialization! We view journaling as a very solitary act but we are very social people and it is particularly those experiences that shape and mold us into the people we are. The very fact that writers of this genre are writing is due to the interactions that they have had with their peers and with their environment. This brings me into the seamless segue of how **ecology** connects.

The term **ecology** in the ISU CHAT model deals with how the environment affects the text and shapes it. It is more than just the weather! Journaling and social media are two genres that take ecology beyond the biological forces in life. If you live in a very hostile environment, then those experiences are going to shape your outlook on life. This “ecology” of your living situation will come out differently in your journaling versus social media. Actually, you might find yourself writing more about the minute moments of happiness to help you keep an optimistic view of the world around you in your journal. On your various social media platforms, however, you could take a more rebellious stance towards the current status quo and fight for more changes. I view journaling as a more passive genre, whereas social media’s ecology allows it to be a genre of change. These two writing platforms are written for very different audiences—an audience of one, to an audience of thousands. It could also affect your journaling if your socializations are really bad, then you might write more pessimistically about things. Ecology takes socialization into account, and shapes the choices you make about when, how and through what medium you write (**production**).

To sum it up more succinctly, Joyce Walker says, “The actual activities that people engage in when they are creating the text” (Walker 76). A big component of this is what inspired you to write in your journal that day. It could be something very small or a big event that happened. Whatever it is, it has sparked something in you that you felt was important enough to write down, and that is what makes journaling so personal. An event that happened to you will elicit a completely different response to another journalist and their entry will be totally different than yours.

To Conclude

Journaling is a great way to articulate and keep your experiences in a way completely different than a social media post would, and to keep your thoughts organized and your life hopefully a little less stressful. Journaling is an uptake genre, and as you write more frequently, you can track how your writing and your entire being have grown and changed. I hope this article has evoked a call to action for you all to start a journal and to really see the changes throughout your years at ISU and beyond. To conclude: Dear Diary, you have so much to offer as a genre and it will be a treat someday to re-read my thoughts and not only relive some of my life’s great memories but also realize how much I’ve grown as a writer.

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Places and Spaces: Ecology, Reading, Writing, and Writing Research

Justin Charron

Where do we find our inspiration to write? How does the environment affect one's writing and the reception of a text? Looking into his travels on the road, Justin Charron finds inspiration in the most seemingly unlikely of places and considers the impact of ecology, production, uptake, reception, and writer identity construction.

"Write. Write every day. Write whether you feel like writing or not . . .

Don't give up. Learn from everything"

—Octavia E. Butler

It was somewhere west of Indianapolis when the food poisoning took hold. I was heading east, seventy-five miles per hour down the highway, the sun creeping up over the frozen Midwestern wasteland. The stubs of last summer's harvest stood lonely and erect. Freight trucks dotted the shoulder of the highway. I scanned the signs. My stomach churned. There is nothing more desperate than the lone traveler sick on the road. Removed from all safety nets or connections. They're truly alone, at the mercy of that great enigmatic figure: the road. Truck stops became my oases. I counted the miles, waiting to purge the vile contents of my stomach into the grimy bathrooms where the truckers and soccer moms relieve themselves, where the vagrants secretly express themselves in dreams of corn queens and porno. I leaned against the filth-covered porcelain. *Even here I'm a writer.* There in the bottom of the toilet, among the putrid vomit and stray pubic hairs floating in the shit

In ISU's version of CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory), we use seven terms to help analyze literate activity. **Production** is one of those terms, and refers to the means through which a text is produced. This includes tools and practices (ISU Writing Program).

and piss and cum, there is my writing process. “*No time for poetry, only exactly what is.*” There’s a certain honesty in the disgusting, the repulsive, the rotten glutinous underbelly of the world. Brutal, unadulterated honesty. That invaluable fuel, the stinking backdoor to reality, accesses the world with a level of intimacy that you might otherwise never experience. Examining the physical location about which the author writes reveals yet another relationship that affects the **production** of a work.

For some authors, being able to commit their experience to the written word in the moment isn’t as productive, for others it is. Distance is a significant part of the ecology in which the activity of writing takes place. Some writers find that they are only able to fully appreciate the nuanced complexities of their experience once they are physically out of that environment. For some this only requires a short distance. For others it might mean traveling across the globe and living in an entirely different culture. Sinéad Morrissey, an Irish poet, discussed this when I spoke with her several years ago at a reading of her new collection, *Parallax*. For her, it was being removed from an environment that allowed her to write with precision about her homeland in Northern Ireland.¹ She found that this distance gave her a much-needed change in perspective, to see things through a new lens that wasn’t possible while she was immersed in her life in the Six Counties. Morrissey intimated that for her, in order to be able to write about a place, she had to be physically removed from it. The ecology of her physical space affects her ability to write.

Likewise, I had an opportunity to speak with Tom Sleight about the effect of time and distance on his writing. Sleight comes from a journalistic background and finds that being removed from a situation gives him an opportunity to formulate his impression of an event beyond just recording facts, as he would for journalistic writing. That distance can come in the form of physical distance from a place, emotional distance, or being able to “step away” temporally with the passage of time, or some combination of these three. After he had reported on the war in Iraq, he found himself thinking about the events in a completely different light. He realized that when he had time to consider all of the events he had witnessed he saw what he termed “a moral ambiguity” in the events, where neither party was objectively in

1. Sinéad Morrissey was nice enough to attend a class on Irish poetry I took as an undergrad. It was from her class commentary that I’m drawing here, and her most recent work addresses this idea through poetics, but this isn’t a literary analysis. I would highly encourage you to read through some of the poems from her collection, *Parallax and Selected Poems*, to get a better idea of how she contends with the idea of distance from a place or moment if you would like a better impression of her perspective on the idea.

the right, and that determining who was in the right or wrong was a fool's errand. He found it was much more interesting, much more honest to write from a place of moral ambiguity rather than from a place of judgment. He attributes his position on this to his years of heroin addiction when living in New York City. He recalled a day when he was in Tompkins Square Park, after years of sobriety, when he saw a guy whom he guessed to be about sixteen years old, strung out and nodding off in the park. His initial reaction was to lecture the young guy, but stopped himself, "Who am I to lecture him? If I'm honest, I enjoyed my days using heroin. I mean, hell, I didn't do it because I didn't enjoy it. I really did. I totally enjoyed it. Was it dangerous? Yes. Was it the best decision I've made? No, but I enjoyed it, so who am I to be the old guy lecturing him?" Sleigh addresses this experience and others in his collection of poetry, *Station Zed: Poems* if you're interested in reading some examples of how he contends with moral ambiguity and his past (Sleigh). This plays a central role in Sleigh's **production**.

Unsurprisingly, not a lot of students that heard this knew how to take it. He made it clear that he was in no way advocating drug use. His point was that we should look at events from a perspective of distance and not cast judgment on a situation, just observe and record. Sleigh and Morrissey found that brutal honesty comes with distance from an event. Seeking out different environments and writing in those new surroundings, or about your experiences there, shapes the work you produce, how you produce it, what genre you write in, how others receive your work, generates expectations for your work, and places your writing in a relationship with texts that have been produced before it and after it. The ecology of the surroundings in which you work affects what you produce and how you read in complex and often unexpected ways. That said, **ecology** doesn't just mean one physical location—it can include the physical location, an author's experience of that location in the moment, and the memory and recreation of that experience in moments of writing later; and even the impact of a later physical location where they are when they write on that memory experience. For me, the open road is a space that is conducive to writing, or at least the writing comes easier after I've been driving for some distance.

Ecology is another CHAT term, and refers to the mere backdrop for our purposeful activities when creating a text. Ecology is the environmental factors that exist beyond our control that may affect our text (ISU Writing Program).

For some authors, being able to commit their thoughts, feelings, and immediate impressions in writing is of utmost importance. Others find that their craft and the process of writing (through text or speaking) must be immediate, such as in battle rap. In the case of battle rap, if the composition is not composed in the moment the composer is often derided

as being unauthentic, or “notebooking,” a derisive term for a type of cheating where a participant is using previously composed material that was written in a notebook. This chiding might even come in the form of hand gestures by the other competitor, mocking them, signaling that the material was prewritten with a hand gesture, mimicking a person writing with a pen and paper.² For one of the better examples of the fluidity with which MCs compose their work and the spontaneous nature of their composition, check out MC Supernatural’s performance at the 2008 Magic Convention where he freestyles, taking cues from random objects passed forward by audience members.

The genre an author chooses to work in can help to determine the level of immediacy with which they work. Likewise, the immediacy with which an author needs to work to convey their thoughts, feelings, and impressions influences the genre they choose to work in. Observing the ways that the place, or **ecology**,³ in which a writer works and the interplay between genre and immediacy required by the subject matter should be something of note for a writing researcher. No matter the genre in which you are working, your surroundings and the distance you have from the event affect your ability to convey that experience, as well as the environment that you are working in at the moment.

In some instances, distance is required. In others, distance is detrimental to the writing process. Learning how to unpack this information and seeing the connection of ecology, the intended **reception** of the work, and the exigency which the writer of a text is responding to, offers a different level of insight beyond what one can access from simply observing the text as an isolated artifact, disconnected from the moment that prompted it, the events, and the places that inspired the author of a mentor text. A greater distance from the moment of inspiration affects the reception of a text.

Reception is another CHAT term, and refers to the how a text is taken up and used by others (who will read the text, how others will use the text or repurpose it, etc.)

2. This same type of gesturing is seen in b-boy circles. I had seen it before, in cyphers in San Diego, and in New York City during the mid-nineties, but never really paid it much mind until I saw it again at an international hip hop festival I attended. I questioned a friend of mine who is an MC, and he explained it to me . . . Even though I already knew what it meant, it seemed that the years had not been as kind to my memory as one would wish. If you watch closely, you can see similar behavior and heckling in movies like *8 Mile*, or in numerous videos of freestyle battles.

3. You can also think of ecology as being far more than just the physical space that inspired a writer or where you are when you read a text. In order to fully consider ecology, we can look at the availability of access to internet, where and in what position you are in when reading or writing, the weather, the background noise of loud roommates, the lighting of a particular room, how the environment makes the space feel more conducive to writing research, and any other host of other influences that fall under the banner of ecology. That said, this article is focusing on the impact of physical space as it pertains to writing.

For me, the experience of being in a place connected to literature alters my state of mind—my mode of thinking—and evokes an emotional response that urges me to write. On one of my many journeys, I found myself standing in the middle of U.S. Route 66, that old and, in many places, abandoned artery that stretched from Chicago, through Normal, south and then west through the broad expanses of the Mojave Desert, all the way to California.⁴ I woke up in the morning and grabbed a cup of cranberry juice from the front lobby’s “continental breakfast,” which amounted to little more than a narrow selection of store-bought muffins and bagels, coffee (decaf or regular), and a pitcher of cranberry juice. Standing there I felt a sense of connection to the place I was in, but also connected to the experience of being in that place with texts I had read previously, like Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and the emotion that they conveyed through their texts.

There I stood, one foot on each of the double yellow lines, staring straight down Route 66: the road of legend. This was the same strip of asphalt that the Okies had traveled down, searching for escape from the dust bowl in the thirties, that Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac had gone screaming down in Neal’s Studebaker at one hundred miles per hour, bebop blaring through the speakers, nothing behind them and everything ahead. Here it was, in all its grit and filth, years of wear and tear. The buildings that lined the street looked like they had been frozen in time. Everyone packed up and headed home just like any other day, but they never returned. The billboards still stood out in the fields, watching for travelers that would never come, their sheets hanging like torn black tarpaper flesh, exposing open wounds of dry rotting boards, preserved by the dry southwestern air. An old streamlined



Figure 1: Photo of Bear Mountain, taken from the dash of my car long after Indiana.

4. You may be asking “What does a trip across the southwestern U.S. have to do with writing research?” and that would be a fair question to ask. The specific location is mostly irrelevant to the larger concept and how this is applicable to writing research, however, the idea that I am circling around is that living is research. Living adds to and affects how you understand all of the things that you have already learned and will learn—**antecedent knowledge**—plus the information you have yet to experience. It changes you as a person—at least if you take the time to be aware of how conscious living changes you.

diner stood, its tubes of neon lettering long extinguished and as cracked as the asphalt beneath my feet. It was there, in that place, that moment, I realized what Kerouac had been getting at: that *On the Road*, or *Sur le Chemin*⁵ as he referred to it in his early drafts, was never about the road, the glorious exploits of two guys crisscrossing the continent, the women, the nights listening to wayward travelers—bums to some—sing about their sweethearts whose affections they had probably never known, or pissing off the back of the truck under the Wyoming night sky. It was about the journey, the path that we're all on, and the connections we make with the people we encounter throughout our lives.

Could I have arrived at this same conclusion through a close reading of the text itself? Possibly, but being out there in the broad expanses, being in that place, in that moment, was something that brought the text screaming back to life and smacked me in the face. The only other experience I can equate with it is the difference between looking at a picture or watching a video of the Grand Canyon and actually going there, feeling the breeze blow up out of the canyon, the smell of the pines lining the rim of the canyon, feeling its immensity, the cold painted black steel rail in your hands, knowing that it is the only thing separating you from this enormous vacuous presence. A picture just can't convey that sense of smallness, that sense of wonder, and the complexity of the beauty of that moment, of that place.

Granted, standing in the middle of that road wasn't the same experience that seeing the Grand Canyon was, but the impact, and having that experience as a point of reference when reading a text that leans so heavily on it for setting and metaphor, had the same level of impact. Reading those same books with that point of reference, that antecedent experiential knowledge, opened up the texts to me in an entirely different way. Whether you're a "creative" writer,⁶ writing a business proposal, a lab report, a literary analysis, or some other genre you might encounter, the knowledge and

5. "On the way" or "on the path"—the original working title of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, mistranslated from French to English by Kerouac in his original working drafts of the novel (Kerouac).

6. I want to emphasize that I am of the mind that all writing is creative, albeit in different aspects and to varying degrees. Even a business memo requires a degree of creativity in wording, approach, and other stylistic choices. A good friend of mine who is a software engineer and a person that has a genuine appreciation for a variety of different types of writing had this realization when looking at job applications and noticed one in particular that was formatted like the back of a My Little Pony package, rainbow graphics and all. At a presentation on post-grad life, an alumnus who had worked for Google before starting his own tech startup talked at length about stylistic choices in resume cover letter writing. The example that stood out the most, and ultimately landed the applicant the position, began not with an explanation of career goals, objectives, or how this position figured into their career path, but with, "I'm scared"—the most honest first line of any application he received. It was also the most honest and attention-grabbing of several hundred applications that he received. If a lowly job resume can be approached creatively, what genre can't be? Of course, there are some genres that afford far less opportunities with more stringent conventions, but even then, there is room for stylistic choices and creative approaches

experience you have with a place will change how you approach reading that text or composing one yourself.

Getting out and living is something that plays into my process, even if it's an academic article or a literary analysis. While I was doing preliminary research for an independent study on Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the opportunity to take several road trips came up. The first of these road trips found me flying to Prescott, Arizona. In the months preceding the trip I had developed a habit of writing poetry. As part of that habit, I used my iPod as a place to jot ideas down as they came to me. Writing happens everywhere. As we flew into Phoenix Airport, I watched out the window. On my iPod, I wrote:

Arrived in Phoenix and sallied forth from our plane like Mallory setting off into the great Himalayan abyss. We wound our way through the great concrete complex; a shrine to the modern necessity immediate travel and found the remainder of our luggage as it spewed out of the belly of the plane, ejaculated down onto the conveyor in some sort of pornographic display of our fellow travelers belongings. Rushed down the conveyors walkways, rushing us, urging us to, yes, yes, yes, coming out onto the street, the explosion of rush hour traffic dashing across our deprived senses. Thrown into this sea of sonic debauchery, we were like fresh meat thrown to the wolves that lurked in the jungles north of Da Nang. The great black fingers of the Rockies, their out-stretched arms reaching out with crooked arthritic fingers grasping in desperation for Phoenix across the floor of the great southwestern. The acrid smell of the burning desert, the scent of the charred chaparral lingered in the air. City was surrounded by long strings of freight cars; the Mid-western vagrants of the rails that lie about waiting to be called up once more; a call that would never come. They were a string of dirty soot stained pearls of wisdom from bygone eras. On the horizon, palms reached their long necks high above the buildings, awkwardly pearling out like gangly, Dahli surrealistic long neck giraffes above the zoo, while the distant mountains stood looming over the sad lonely grave of the valley.⁷

7. As troubled of a relationship as I have with technology, it has become an integral part of my production, regardless of the type of writing I'm doing. Being able to capture a thought wherever it might occur to me and being able to access that information on a more manageable platform (like my laptop) is essential. It's handy, and it's convenient in that I can't lose it as easily as a piece of paper. Using a typing app or the notes on my phone has allowed me to capture the info/thought/idea in a format that is accessible and has the benefit of being an editable file, unlike a physical paper note that I'd only have to type up once I got to somewhere where I could sit down with my computer . . . Besides that, I absolutely cannot stand hand-writing things. I figured out that I type much faster than I am able to hand-write, thanks to my mother for taking the time to teach me how to type on the old manual typewriter in my family's business office. Heavy, clunky, and downright wonderful. That thing gave a real sense of accomplishment with every line you finished typing. Bing!

Uptake is another term we use in the Writing Program. It is the process we go through to take up a new idea and think about it until it makes sense (ISU Writing Program).

I wrote this down, trying to capture my gut impression, or my **uptake** of the experience, the first words that came to me to describe the impact of what I was seeing, experiencing. I thought this was going to be fodder for more poetry in the spirit of Beat poetry. What it turned into is a novel I've been working on for about four or five years now. A

far cry from the series of one-page poems I thought was going to come out of this sketch.

I don't want you to get the impression that I'm advocating for everyone to take off on wild cross-country escapes. Not everyone can. The opportunity to make that trip across most of the country on the cheap (i.e. at very little to no cost to me) doesn't come along for everyone. Flip back to that moment where I realized the brutal honesty of the disgusting. Staring down into that vile toilet, wishing I had never even heard of the Midwestern casual dining franchise, I understood that I was seeing an aspect of the world that is honest in a way I had seldom seen. There was another moment on that road trip that gave me a sense of connectedness that isn't easily conveyed, not easily explained through materialism, but that is rooted in the physical space; the **ecology**.

Thinking back to those moments in the Love's truckstop bathrooms, after the toxins had been effectively purged from my stomach, I took refuge in a motel in western Ohio before setting out on what I thought was going to be the next-to-last leg of my journey. Several hundred miles, and a few days later, I departed my brother's house nestled in the hills of West Virginia and pushed north. I made my way through the Appalachians of western Maryland, out across the rolling hills of Pennsylvania-Dutch Amish country with its horse drawn carriages and roadside apple pies that were unfortunately out of season during the bitter mid-January days—veering northeast in New Jersey straight toward the sprawling metropolis that is New York City. A place that is at once one of the single most amazing and beautiful places, and worst examples of modern civilization, all rolled into one. But remember, there's beauty in that ugliness—something that someone once described as “the beatific” New York City, home of the dumb saints, the holy goofs.

I was just south of Paterson, New Jersey, when the thought hit me. Several miles, a gas stop, and a brief conversation with the attendant, and I found myself meandering down around Bear Mountain, that round-shouldered giant standing guard on the western bank of the Hudson River north of the city. I crossed the toll bridge and turned back south. Not more than a couple hundred feet from the end of the bridge, there was a turn-off for a scenic overlook. I pulled in, grabbed my copy of *On the Road*, and one of

the beers that I had hauled with me from Montréal, the first destination of the road trip, only to realize that the beers had partially frozen in the trunk of my car. Turns out sweatshirts don't make for great insulation. Yes, I keep a book with me on road trips, especially solo road trips. Always bring a book when you travel. They make for great company.

I hopped the rusted steel rails put in place to keep tourists from wandering too close to the cliff that dropped down to the rocky bank of the Hudson below. The sun hung low over Bear Mountain as I cracked the beer open and lit a cigarette. I looked out at the eagles soaring over the reach of the shimmering blue water as it flowed south. I flipped through the dog-eared pages of the book until I found the passage that I had thought about way back south of Paterson:

I started hitching up the thing. Five scattered rides took me to the desired Bear Mountain Bridge, where Route 6 arched in from New England. It began to rain in torrents when I was let off there. It was mountainous. Route 6 came over the river, wound around a traffic circle, and disappeared into the wilderness. Not only was there no traffic but the rain come down in buckets and I had no shelter. I had to run under some pines to take cover; this did no good; I began crying and swearing and socking myself on the head for being such a damn fool. I was forty miles north of New York; all the way up I'd been worried about the fact that on this, my big opening day, I was only moving north instead of the so-longed for west. Now I was stuck on my northern-most hang-up. I ran a quarter-mile to an abandoned cute English-style filling station and stood under the dripping eaves. High up over my head the great hairy Bear Mountain sent down thunderclaps that put the fear of God in me. All I could see were smoky trees and dismal wilderness rising to the skies. "What the hell am I doing up here?" I cursed, I cried for Chicago. "Even now they're all having a big time, they're doing this, I'm not there, when will I get there!"—and so on. (Kerouac)

I shut the book and tucked it into the pocket of my heavy coat. I lifted my beer, "Here's to road trips, to Jazz, to you, Jack, *un canadien Français*, born *en Nouvelle-Angleterre* to another."⁸

8. Yes, I'm fully aware that there are some serious mental gymnastics going on here. *Why?* You may ask. It relates back to a quote from Jack Kerouac's journals, "I am French Canadian, born in New England. When swear, I often swear in French. When dream, I always dream in French. When I cry, I always cry in French." Of course, this is translated to English from Kerouac's mother-tongue: Québécois French. In the moment, and having a limited level of fluency in French, I was left with only the ability to say what I wanted through code-switching mid-sentence. Saying New England in French gives a sense of distance from the place, of being *from* there, but never feeling fully a part of that place. It's mere happenstance that I, and Kerouac, happen to be from that region. It's never been home in any real sense if you believe that old adage, home is where the heart is. If that adage holds true, *mon cœur est à Montréal*. That's where home is.

I finished the half-frozen beer, trying in vain to muster enough warmth in my hands to melt its contents. I climbed back over the rails into the parking lot and walked down the narrow shoulder of the road. It's still there, that filling station where Kerouac tried to find shelter from the rain. It's a tourist information center these days; a rack of maps and attraction brochures stood outside. I stood there taking it all in. This was the place of Kerouac's first ill-conceived attempt at heading west, and here I was, coming to the end of this, the first of many journeys, a waypoint in a much longer journey that can't be plotted on maps, its destination beyond the measure of longitude and latitude. It was under the eaves of that building, the former filling station, that I understood that the "road" wasn't a road, but a path: The Way. I had been trying to figure out this feeling, the push-pull, the imperative to leave home, but always feeling drawn back. It was there under those eaves that I understood that it was the road, not the concrete, asphalt veins that crisscross America that were the road, but an internal path, the way to growth, to understanding, to connecting to something beyond the physical spaces, beyond that which we can measure, quantify, statistically analyze and compare. I was *sur le chemin*. I had been my whole life.

By this point, you're probably wondering what the hell this has to do with writing research, or writing at all. We often think of writing as that static activity. We think of texts as something on a shelf, in a library, artifacts catalogued and deposited among the long rows of shelves of libraries, conversation pieces placed like trophies atop a mantle to impress company like trophies—evidence of intellectualism.

Though time certainly changes a place, there is something that remains of that moment of inspiration that we are able to access if only we are still enough, quiet enough to hear the breaths of the past that echo in those places. These experiences, the feelings, the sense that there is something about being in a particular place that adds an entirely different dimension to a text that you've read, that connects, that roots your writing in the experiences of past generations. That's what this 'ecology' thing is all about, not just whether or not you could read outside because of the weather. It goes far beyond that. It is often difficult to explain. It's not neat, it's messy and complicated, not easily conveyed to someone that hasn't taken the time to quiet their mind and exist in a place, experiencing it for all that it is: beautiful and crudely wonderful. The ecology of a text is much larger, an integral piece of the text that affects all of the other categories of a cultural-historical activity theory analysis of a genre, or a specific mentor text.

I don't recall who said it, but I heard this piece of advice while I was finishing my undergrad, sometime in the last three semesters of that period,

“I am a writer until I put down the pen. Always be writing.” I think of it a little bit differently. Writing, and for that matter, writing research, is an ongoing process. Every day is part of your writing process. Everything you do is research. It only takes stopping and appreciating the experience of the lived life to understand this. That includes the spaces that we move in. It’s not something easy to do, but it has proven immensely valuable to me. Get out into the world and be still. Listen for the echoes, give yourself space to hear them, be present where you are—wherever that may be. For me, living, purposefully, consciously living, is my writing process. Always live, always be writing.

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Sorry You Have to Read This: The Five Stages of Writing with Anxiety

Allison Hauser

In this article, Hauser examines her process in writing essays for her classes. She reflects on how her anxiety and Imposter Syndrome impact her in many different ways and play a major role in forming her writing research identity.

I'm sorry you have to read this article that I wrote. I can guarantee you that there is a much better one out there than this one. I just had an idea, tricked someone into thinking it was good, and then threw some words together. This is a mess! Why don't you just keep flipping pages until you hit the next article? That's good, just move along, nothing to see here! Wait, wait, wait, hold on! Don't go! That was just my anxiety talking! OK, let me explain myself.

When it comes to writing, I am a self-diagnosed sufferer of "Imposter Syndrome." Imposter Syndrome was first named by Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes and is "the idea that you have only succeeded due to luck, and not because of your talent or qualifications" (Abrams, *TIME Magazine*). Imposter Syndrome draws on feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and the fear of being seen as a "fraud," or someone who doesn't belong. In a recent study, approximately 70% of people have experienced these feelings in their lives, including, to varying degrees, both men and women. It can occur in any aspect of life where "success" is involved (Abrams). When it comes to school, there is often a seemingly concrete and determined gauge of what it means

to “succeed.” This can be daunting, overwhelming, and lead to massive amounts of stress and anxiety in students, including myself.

What is so surprising to me about my (unofficial) diagnosis is that I am, in my very humble opinion, a confident person. I have no trouble meeting new people. I can talk about television or music or movies for days. I love to share my opinion about pretty much anything. I can even solve a pretty difficult math problem without breaking a sweat. For me, I only tend to feel the Imposter Syndrome symptoms kick in when I am writing. That is because Imposter Syndrome plays a major role in forming my **writing research identity**. Your writing research identity is made up of all the knowledge you have (and don't have) about writing, the practices you do (and don't do) when writing, and how you personally feel and adapt your skills and understanding to any situation involving writing. I feel anxiety very often when I write for school, no matter what genre or form I am writing in, but, because I am an English major and the most common genre I write in is “essay,” this is where my anxiety is the worst. My Imposter Syndrome is not just having a bad feeling about one essay; it is something that comes into play nearly any time I write, making it a huge component of my writing identity.

It is important for me to distinguish between “writing with anxiety” and “writer's block.” In my world, writer's block means that I don't know *what* to write. I rarely suffer from a lack of ideas. The idea will come easy to me, even if I don't feel entirely confident in it. I can express these ideas verbally to my peers. The trouble arises in *how* to write. Here, we can use Illinois State University's version of a well-known theory called **CHAT, or cultural-historical activity theory**. Though CHAT can be used to make sense of all kinds of things in the world, at ISU, we break it into seven terms that help us better understand our literate activities. If we think about writing in terms of ISU CHAT, this question of “how” gets at matters of **representation**. Representation gets at how we conceptualize, think, talk about, and plan a text in our heads. How do I bring myself to put pen to paper (I guess, in this modern age, it's more like fingers to keys) and start writing something that will even look like an essay? How do I take this idea and turn it into something that someone else will read and judge?

In order to write this article, I've been tracking my behavior, my **uptake**, when writing an essay for a course I am in this semester. I've delved more into my writing process than I ever have in my academic career and interestingly enough, I've learned some things about who I am as a writer. To me, my writing process is so much more than those basic steps that they teach when you first learn to write essays. You know what I'm talking about: prewrite, research, draft, revise, edit, done (KU Writing Center). While, I still follow

this basic process to some extent, things start to get a little wonky when I factor in my own writing research identity. This one-process-fits-all approach to writing doesn't really work for me. My process goes a little something like this . . .

Five Stages of Writing with Anxiety

Stage One: Major Procrastination

I think it's safe to say that when it comes to writing, I'm not alone in procrastinating. It's common to hear students lament about how much they've been putting off getting work done. My friends and I will do anything to avoid starting to work on our assignments, which usually ends up with my peers pulling all-nighters like it's their job. I am not such a student. I love sleep, so the idea of staying up writing all night sounds like the WORST. For the most part, my procrastination does not stem from disinterest or laziness; it's a direct product of my anxiety. I procrastinate because I am too busy worrying about what my finished essay will look like. If I don't write, the negative judgement from my professor about how bad my essay is can just be avoided, right? Wrong. If I just watch one more episode of television, I'll feel more relaxed and be more excited to write, right? Wrong. Tomorrow, I'll be in a better mood and will definitely get more done, right? Nope. Will I get an adrenaline rush from waiting until the last minute and then write better? Definitely not. As counterintuitive as it may sound, I procrastinate because I care too much. I am afraid and worried about writing something that matters to me only to have it negatively received. Even though I know procrastinating won't stop the feedback on my essay from happening, I still use it as a means to distance myself from writing. I am only attempting to delay the inevitable.

Everyone loves to tell me what the proper way to avoid procrastination is. I've tried to use timers that have me write for a few minutes then take a break, then repeat until the essay is finished. I've tried scheduling rewards for writing certain amounts, giving myself pep talks, or breaking my writing down into smaller, "more manageable" chunks (whatever that means). None of it seems to help, though, because it doesn't address the real root of my procrastination. The tools I've been told to use to fix my procrastination seem like they have forgotten to remember that I'm a human being with a bunch of anxiety about writing. Knowing my writing identity helps me take a step back and recognize, if only for a moment, that this first stage of my writing process, which often leads to so much more stress, stems from a place of anxiety.

Stage Two: Let's Talk About It

Because a majority of my friends are also in my same major and in similar classes, we tend to be writing essays at the same time. Naturally, conversations about what essays we are working on come up often. Even though it may seem like casual chit-chat to an outsider, I'm using these conversations to quietly compare myself and my writing process to my peers. I'll make note of how far along other students are in their writing ("What do you mean you've already started?!"; "Oh good, you haven't even looked at the prompt!"). Comparing my own process to my peers can be both helpful and dangerous. Sometimes a conversation about essays can leave me feeling relieved, appeasing my anxiety by letting me know that I am not alone in my stress and concern. More often though, it leaves me feeling more panicked. This relates directly to my Imposter Syndrome. If I'm not procrastinating enough in comparison to others, I worry that my friends will realize how much harder I have to work to keep up with them (even though I don't have to race to keep up) and won't see me as skilled or smart (they won't). If I'm procrastinating too much, I worry that I won't be seen as scholarly enough. I also worry that I have underestimated the assignment and won't be able to dedicate enough time to get it done, which will also lead to me being uncovered as a fraud.

These conversations typically involve some very specific language. My anxiety tells me to talk about my writing as much as I can, but also as *casually* as possible, even though on the inside I'm panicking. I might be desperate to bring up my ideas, but I always introduce it in a hedging way. I bookend my ideas with "this is what I'm kind of thinking" and "I'm not sure if that's right, it's just an idea." I downplay how much I care about my idea or my interest so that, if I'm wrong, it's fine because I don't *really* know what I'm doing anyways. In an article from Inc.com, "9 Telltale Signs You Have Imposter Syndrome," they call this behavior "minimizing." This involves using the words "maybe" or "just." This language tells the listener that I am not at all attempting to brag about my writing or ideas and, to certain listeners, can show my lack of confidence. I use minimizing and hedging in multiple contexts outside of essay writing. During any activity that causes me anxiety and fear of failure, I will use language to distance myself from the task and appear more casual and laid-back. More so than most of my actions, I find that my language here most clearly shows my imposter syndrome and fear of failure. If I express myself by recognizing that I am afraid and doubtful in my ideas, others will not be surprised when I turn in a "bad" essay and "fail." In this step, even when I'm just having everyday conversations with my friends, I am still expressing my writing research identity, so much so that it affects the language I use.

What is most telling about these casual conversations is how much I keep all of this internalized. I am playing it cool, only stressed enough to match the emotions of my peers without giving away how much anxiety I am actually feeling. Why do I do this? Why do we deny these emotions? In the moments where I have felt comfortable enough to share my stress, I've found that others are actually in the same boat as me. We are posturing so others don't know how stressed and anxious and worried we actually are. Who is this helping? Looking back to ISU's version of cultural-historical activity theory, the **socialization** around writing that happens in academia often isn't great. Within CHAT, socialization asks us to consider how people interact with each other as they produce and use different texts. For me, when the text I am producing is an essay for class, my interactions with my peers, when fueled by my anxiety, don't always leave me feeling so wonderful after. I'm willing to admit that denial of my anxiety hasn't helped me much so far in life, so maybe it's time we start thinking about changing the conversation.

Step Three: Time to Be Productive (Sort Of)

It's time to start doing some work! It took me two steps to get here (and honestly probably a couple weeks in real time), but I'm at the point in my writing process where I am ready to start writing! I start first by opening Google Docs and making a page of just quotes from various articles or books that might connect to my topic in some way. I choose long quotes that seem relevant to my topic and try to list as many as I can. If they are online sources, I *never* just copy and paste them. I always type them out, even if I am just moving them over from one web page tab to another. This is a slow way of making me feel like I am being productive and "researching" when, in reality, I'm delaying putting my OWN ideas together. I know what you are thinking now: "but Allison, I dunno, this sounds pretty productive to me." The problem is that I rarely use all of the quotes that I find, sometimes even going as far as not even looking at the document when the time finally comes to write the paper. By writing out quotes, I am focusing on how others have said it better than me already. I undercut my own ideas by thinking that the scholars I'm drawing from already have it together in a better way that I ever could.

After I finish finding all my quotes, I take a long, "well-deserved" break from writing and thinking about my essay. I mean, I just did all that research! I worked so hard typing out those quotes. I spent hours on it! I'm way ahead of everyone else and now it will be soooo easy to write the final paper because of my quotes! Wow! This feeling of euphoria and pride in my minimal effort

lasts for a few days (to weeks, depending on the due date) until the anxiety and stress starts to creep back in. Now, I'm feeling panicked again.

At this point I start to write outlines. For any major essay, I will write probably at least six outlines before I start writing. Rather than writing them on my computer, they are always handwritten on lined notebook paper and usually involve a lot of different colors. Like with finding quotes, my outlining can be seen as a productive tool and good use of my time on the surface, but I am still using outlines to put off actually writing the essay. The real evidence of the unproductiveness of this stage comes when I find myself rewriting the same outline again and again and again with only minor, *minor* changes. It is the idea that if I can make my outline perfect then that will mean my essay is going to be perfect, too. The outlines, despite usually being a major time suck, are the one place in my entire writing process where I feel most confident. For a fleeting moment, I realize that maybe I *do* know something about the topic I've chosen. Maybe I *could* actually write this essay. Maybe, just maybe, things will be OK.

This is the part of my writing process that most clearly matches up with the "traditional" version of the writing process. It's the one that makes me feel most productive and most like a Writer (with a capital W, ya know, the Real Deal). Even though my **trajectory**, or movement, in writing looks like everyone else's, it doesn't necessarily feel like it. This stage is perhaps my most productive, but it also is deeply influenced by my anxiety and Imposter Syndrome. Just as our writing research identity is unique to each of us, so is our uptake of the writing process itself.

Step Four: The Cycle of Hying and Hating

After rewriting my outlines and changing things around for the millionth time, I start to realize that maybe it's time to start writing this essay. This moment usually comes days (sometimes hours if I've been particularly worried) before the official due date of my essay. Having this due date shifts my anxiety into overdrive and I start to finally write. Though it feels like some magical force that compels me to write, it is actually just my anxiety finally manifesting into something productive. While I am writing, I enter into a cycle of hyping myself up then tearing myself down. I hype myself up by saying "I just gotta do this, just gotta get it done." I try to emphasize that once it is done, I'll have so much free time and things will have to be better. This works only for a moment, and as I get started "I gotta do this" changes to "I hate this so much" and "I don't even care about this paper." These two statements, though they are said in earnest in the moment, are actually both complete lies. Despite what my anxiety says, I identify as someone who likes

to write. I like to have a final product that expresses my ideas and putting my thoughts into something concrete, even though it causes me stress, is a pretty cool thing. I feel so much anxiety because I *do* care, and I care way too much. As with my hedging, by saying that I don't care, I have given myself an out to my failure. If this writing is bad, that's OK! I didn't even care enough to make it good in the first place. Interesting enough, these moments of saying "I hate this" and "I don't care" feel cathartic. I know that I truly do care, and I don't hate, but allowing myself the space and moment to deny that and feel frustrated helps me push past my anxiety.

Step Five: Defeat, or Time to Turn In Garbage

By some miracle, I always manage to get my essays in on time. I write and I write and I worry but then I write some more. This moment of feeling done is the only time I let myself feel any pride or relief. But the moment that I submit my paper, the language of anxiety creeps back in and I start to talk about how "garbage" what I wrote was. I'm not sure how this word entered my vocabulary, but it's the main adjective I use to describe my writing. I tell myself that what I have written, my final product, the fruits of my days of labor and worry, is just garbage. "Bad" doesn't feel fitting because it's too subjective and common. "Shitty" is too extreme and intense. But garbage paints the perfect picture in my mind: a bunch of scraps of words jammed together in an essay that might smell a little bit, doesn't exactly all fit together, and definitely anyone who reads this will immediately know they are dealing with some real garbage.

So, What's the Point?

After tracing my whole process, I was, at first, so baffled by how much anxiety I have when writing and how much it impacts me as a writer. I have always done well with writing. Even the most garbage-y garbage of essays that I have turned in to my instructors has received mainly positive feedback. Perhaps this only contributes to my Imposter Syndrome; I just keep fooling everyone that my writing is better than it seems. It is only with the passing of time that I start to recognize my writing and essays are more than just garbage. When I go back and read things I've written (waaay later, of course), I'm proud of my ideas and my writing ability, even though my anxiety tells me not to be.

My intention in writing this article was never to teach you how to overcome your anxiety. This isn't "10 Quick Tips to Beat Writing Anxiety." In fact, *please* don't do any of the things I do. These are *my* stages of writing with anxiety and I guarantee your anxiety with writing will manifest in

different ways and at different points during your writing process. The goal of this article is to recognize, both for my benefit and maybe yours, how this anxiety that is a part of my life influences me as a writer, in a negative way, but perhaps also a positive way. I know my writing habits. I know what essays will cause me the most stress, what I really mean when I say “I hate this essay,” and why I am hedging my ideas in conversation. I also know that when I do these self-critical things, I am doing it to push myself to be the best writer that I can because I love writing, I care about writing, and I see its importance. I also firmly believe that I am not alone in my writing anxiety and feeling like an imposter when writing.

I hope that you can look at your own processes and see how they are influenced (or not) by anxiety, worry, fear, and lack of confidence. This is me telling you it's OK if writing anxiety is a part of your writing identity! Turns out, a lot of us are feeling pretty stressed and worried about the projects, essays, and writing we are assigned, so why not share that? Maybe that essay you turned in is garbage, but ya know what? You did it! You wrote it! You took an idea and you put it into words and you wrote it down! That's awesome! And hey, what if what you wrote down wasn't garbage at all? What if it is great? Examine your own writing process by pausing, stepping back, and listening to yourself. How do you talk about writing? Is your process anything like mine? Maybe you suffer from Imposter Syndrome, too! Welcome to the club! Let's just keep writing!

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Prove It: Investigating Mathematical Proofs as a Writing Genre

Jonathan Sabin

Too many people believe that their future careers won't involve any more writing than is necessary to fill out a resume. Jonathan Sabin reveals this notion to be nothing more than wishful thinking in his article about why even something as seemingly antithetical to English as math requires the ability to communicate clearly and effectively through writing.

No, you didn't misread the title. This article is about mathematical proofs. And yes, mathematical proofs are a genre of writing. This may come as a surprise to many readers. After all, most people reading this will not have dealt with proofs since they were underclassmen in high school. Some may not even remember what a proof is. Those who do remember will probably be confused by my assertion of proofs as a writing genre, but it's true. A formal mathematical proof requires just as much writing ability as mathematical ability, sometimes even more so. That is why I have chosen to write this in-depth analysis of proofs as a genre. And yes, my good friends: this means that CHAT, our helpful and reliable—if somewhat annoyingly omnipresent—companion will be coming along for the ride.

I say “annoying,” but, in all honesty, I make fun of that which I love because CHAT is one of our most helpful tools in understanding exactly why proofs constitute a genre of writing. In her article, “Just CHATting,” Joyce R. Walker explains that ISU's version of CHAT, or cultural-historical activity theory, “refers to a set of theories about rhetorical activity . . . that help us look at the how/why/what of writing practices” (Walker, 2010, pp.

71–72). In the ISU Writing Program, these theories center around seven different terms that help ISU students analyze literate activity and outline the different aspects that factor into how a person goes about writing a text. We will not cover all seven of these literate activities, but we will come across a few of them in our discussion.

Before we dive into the rest of this article, however, there is a matter that I wish to briefly address. Although the opportunity for me to write a piece for this journal initially spawned from a writing assignment I completed for an English class, I did not choose to accept the offer simply because my professor wanted me to. It is true that I wrote this article, in part, to explore the full implications of the classification of proofs as a writing genre and to explain the reasoning behind it. However, there is also a far more important and meaningful message behind all this: it is a lesson that I believe ought to be conveyed far more often, especially to college freshmen. It is one that I have reason to wish had been taught to me much sooner. But we'll come back to that later. First, a quick refresher.

What Is a Proof?

A mathematical proof is a process by which a chain of logic is presented and followed through to completion in order to show conclusively and indisputably that a specific mathematical claim will always be true. For any new mathematical idea to be taken as fact, it must first be mathematically proven. After all, math is the medium with which we quantify and analyze the world around us. “We need math,” says Dale Stokdyk, the Assistant Vice President of Southern New Hampshire University, in his article titled “Importance of Mathematics and Why We Study It:” “Galileo Galilei used it to explain the universe. Math resolves truths and uncovers errors. It makes our work more credible. Reports, studies and research are all but discounted without quantifiable facts” (Stokdyk, 2016). For our understanding of the world to be accurate, therefore, mathematics and, by extension, all mathematical concepts, must be provably accurate. It is for this reason that a complete understanding of mathematics is impossible without an understanding of proofs.

As an example of this, let us draw upon the “historical” aspect of the CHAT acronym and consider the ancient past. Around the fifth century B.C., there was a group of mathematicians called Pythagoreans, named after the famed mathematician Pythagoras. These mathematicians believed that every number in existence was expressible as a ratio of two whole numbers—that is, that every number was equal to one whole number

divided by another whole number, a numerical property referred to as rationality. This was the Pythagoreans' most strongly held mathematical conviction. Indeed, the strength of this belief was likely bolstered by the fact that, to them, it had religious significance; the Pythagoreans, in the words of researcher and science writer Brian Clegg, in his online article titled "The Dangerous Ratio," "believed that the universe was built around the whole numbers" (Clegg, 2011). So, imagine their shock when they turned out to be wrong. History is a bit fuzzy on who exactly it was that proved that not all numbers were rational, but the popular belief is that it was the Pythagorean mathematician named Hippasus of Metapontum. So, for the sake of simplicity, we'll just assume that it was he who first discovered the existence of irrational numbers. How did he do this? He formulated a proof demonstrating that the square root of two was irrational. I have included an image of this proof below (Figure 1). The technical aspects of this proof are not important for the purposes of this article, but those who wish to view a very easily followed explanation of the reasoning can visit the URL listed in the first entry on the Works Cited page of the article. For our purposes, it

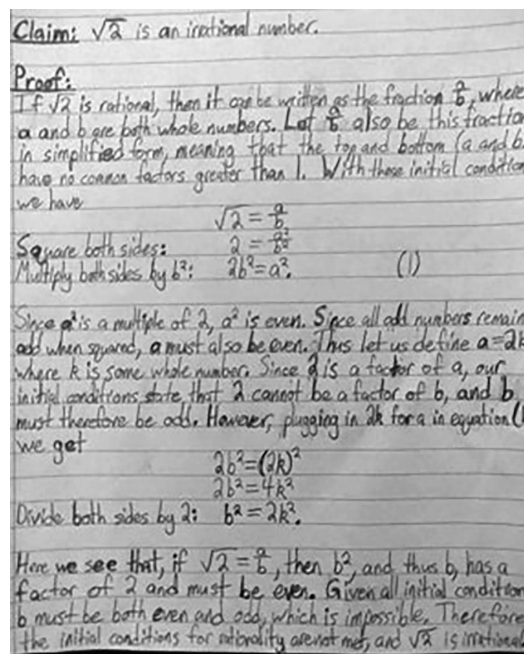


Figure 1: A variation on the most commonly taught mathematical proof that the square root of two is an irrational number. I wrote it out by hand with the intention of making the logic of the proof easier to follow.

suffices to say that Hippasus discovered that any fraction of whole numbers that equaled the square root of two would have to have a denominator that was simultaneously even and odd, which is an impossibility.

Now, to the non-mathematically-inclined reader, this discovery may seem insignificant. But be assured that it was a discovery of massive consequence and implications with regards to our understanding of mathematics. So much so, in fact, that I would be utterly remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to discuss reception, one of the seven terms of ISU CHAT. Reception, according to Walker, "deals with how a text is taken up and used by others" (Walker, p. 75). The reception of written proofs has to do with the mathematical community's understanding of the underlying mathematical concept as well as how it affects the landscape of mathematical knowledge. This particular proof would send shockwaves through that landscape, forever changing our perception of mathematics. It demonstrated that a large portion of mathematical knowledge up to that point was founded upon an incorrect notion. It certainly shocked the Pythagoreans. So much so that, according to popular legend, they became rather irrational themselves and drowned Hippasus at sea for his heretical discovery. Whether or not this last part is really true is, at this point, neither certain nor important. But it's amusing to imagine a group of disillusioned mathematicians ganging up on one of their own and murdering him over a math problem. Entertaining legends aside, I hope the reader now appreciates the importance and potential significance of a mathematical proof. Every new proof further shapes and develops our overall understanding of the field of mathematics.

The Problem of Teaching and Learning Proofs

Despite this fact, student math-lovers from all over struggle with proofs. The fact that such an important part of mathematics is so difficult for so many students to grasp, even for those most proficient in math, has resulted in a good deal of frustration for, and even outright hatred of, mathematical proofs. So, the question, then, is what exactly makes proofs so hard for so many students?

In my search for an answer to this question, I looked to the students themselves. This was not a difficult thing for me to do. I simply Googled the question: "Why do people hate proofs?" The search results are full of forums in which primarily high school students air their grievances on the subject. Many claim that their teachers are to blame. The reason for this is explained in great detail in an article by Zacharie Mbaitiga titled "Why

College or University Students Hate Proofs in Mathematics?” The subject of proofs is, after all, a fairly difficult one to teach, as most theorems in math are proved using other, already-proven theorems. It is not necessary for a proof to contain additional proofs for all these already-proven theorems, so most don't. This means that many of the proofs used as examples by teachers involve other concepts that their students aren't familiar with and that the teacher doesn't take the time to prove or even explain (Mbaitiga, 2009, p. 35). This problem has much to do with the ISU CHAT term, socialization, which Walker says “describes the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute and use texts” (Walker, p. 76). Among math educators, there appears to be difficulty when it comes to engaging effectively in their interaction with students when it comes to teaching them about proofs.

Another reason for the animosity towards proofs has to do with their purpose. What are they for? Are they necessary? Many of the students on these forums seem to think that they aren't, some even venting their frustration on this point very aggressively. For example, one of the comments in one forum thread was that of a student explaining why he “knows” that proofs are stupid. I unfortunately will not be quoting said comment in this article for the simple reason that it is unprintable in this journal. Suffice it to say that many students feel offended that, in a subject in which they know they excel, there is a seemingly unnecessary concept that they absolutely cannot understand, however hard they try. And this reaction is in many ways understandable, but the fact of the matter is that proofs are one of the most *absolutely* necessary parts of mathematics. Without proofs, nothing in mathematics would have any credibility, and the whole discipline would basically amount to highly sophisticated guesswork.

Writing About Math

OK, so perhaps at this point the reader is thinking, “Why is there an article about math proofs in a journal about writing? What does math have to do with English?” The answer is quite simple. While it is true that the formulation of proofs doesn't involve much writing, once the proof is complete it *does* need to be written, documented, and published. It also needs to be properly explained, and such an adequate explanation must be in words. After all, as I myself had not learned until I took this deeper look at proofs, mathematics is the quantitative, numerical, and analytical representation of thoughts and ideas, which are always conveyed through language. It is therefore imperative that mathematical proofs be treated less as a type of math problem and more as a specialized writing genre.

Interview

For further elaboration on mathematical proofs as a type of written genre, as well as further discussion regarding their necessity in the field of mathematics, I have included a portion of an interview, conducted some weeks prior as part of a separate writing project, with Sunil Chebolu, PhD, a professor of mathematics here at Illinois State University.

JONATHAN: Can you explain in general terms why mathematical proofs are so important? If you were explaining it to someone who wasn't as familiar with the field of mathematics why proofs are essential?

SUNIL: Yes, mathematical proofs are essential, because if you want to know something with certainty, how can you do that without a mathematical proof? With computers, by hand, you can only check finitely many things, but if you want to know that a statement holds for every integer or is true in all cases, you can't possibly do it all by hand or computer. Using a computer or by hand, you can say, "This is most likely true because it is true for a wide range of examples," but you have to make sure that it holds for all.

J: And in your career as a mathematician, how often did you have to formulate mathematical proofs? How often did you have to use them?

S: Oh, almost every day! That's like the bread and butter for mathematicians. When I'm teaching courses I prove things, when I'm doing research I prove things, publishing papers, giving talks. Yes, proofs are everywhere for us.

J: So aside from the mathematical processes involved, what else goes into writing a proof? Because I've seen a lot of proofs that required more than just the correct application of numbers and operators. Many of them even used more verbal writing than mathematical writing.

S: Oh, yeah. In fact, in most proofs, it's mostly words. I mean, people have this misconception that mathematical proof is all numbers and equations. No. Mathematical proof is about ideas. So numbers, equations, formulas are all representations of some ideas, right? So mathematical proof is just an assembly of ideas in a clear and coherent manner that takes you from the hypothesis to the conclusion. So that's how I think about mathematical proofs.

J: Yeah. And obviously, not all those ideas can be explained in just numbers—

S: Right.

J: Now, in my research on this subject, I learned that writing proofs isn't something that's really done in mathematical professions outside of academics and that it's mainly only academic mathematicians who do

that kind of work. So how then are those proofs used by the mathematical community at large?

S: Well, I don't think the mathematical community at large, outside pure mathematics, really uses those proofs. They use more the results that we prove. Because, for instance, applied mathematics or business; there it's more computation, rather than proofs. So we develop the techniques and results, and they take those end products and use them in their work. They don't really worry about how that theorem is proved because we already do that, and we publish those results.

J: So proof writing is more a case of laying the groundwork for the mathematical ideas and tools used by the mathematical community—

S: To justify why those things are correct. Because if you want to use something in your work, you'd better know it's correct. How do you know it's correct? You need a proof. And that is what pure mathematicians do.

I feel it is important that I repeat a key point stated within the interview, one which I mentioned earlier. Chebolu described mathematical notation as a representation of mathematical ideas. This is an especially important point because the way in which people share and communicate thoughts and ideas is through the medium of spoken and written language. Therefore, the communication of the mathematical ideas represented by all those numbers and equations must be carried out through that same medium of language. This is why quality writing is so important in a mathematical proof. However, it would be very naïve of me to claim that the writing ability required for a proof is the same kind of writing ability displayed in an essay or this article, for example. Which is why I took a deeper look at proofs from a compositional standpoint.

Writing a Proof

As I carefully considered how best to perform the task of writing about this particular genre, it occurred to me that I'd never actually written a formal mathematical proof before. As a mathematics major, I had of course formulated proofs for homework assignments, quizzes, and exams, but I'd never later constructed them into complete, fully written-out, formal proofs. It dawned on me that, if I presumed to be seen as any kind of credible writer on this subject, I would have to construct a formal proof from scratch and derive my own insight thereby. And that's exactly what I did. That proof can be found in the appendix of this article for anyone who may be interested.

Before I continue, I feel it is important to briefly outline the difference between a formal and informal proof. A formal proof, such as the one shown in the appendix, is a proof that is properly typed, styled, and formatted in the standard, approved manner for mathematical publication. An informal proof is a shortened version of the formal proof, usually handwritten and containing many symbols that serve as mathematical shorthand for phrases such as “therefore,” “for any,” “there exists,” “such that,” etc. Non-mathematicians are not expected to know the meanings of these symbols, so formal proofs are expected to contain written explanations instead, making them much longer yet far easier to understand. The reader will therefore be forgiven for finding the informal proof below (Figure 2) impossible to follow. The far more coherent proof in the appendix is the formal version of the same proof.

Now, in my defense (just in case any of my math professors get to read this), it was the first time I had ever even thought to write a formal proof. But the point of doing so wasn't to become an expert. I wrote this proof to gain an insight into proof writing that the experts, who hardly have to think about the process of writing proofs anymore because they're so used to doing it, might no longer even consider. This being the primary focus of this exercise, I compiled a list of observations (Figure 3) relevant to that purpose as I went about writing the proof.

The most difficult part was presenting mathematical ideas in written form, and, as it turned out, I was attempting to do a good deal too much of this. I had originally planned to explain every mathematical term in the proof as to a layman (see Figure 4 below for a picture of my first attempted draft). As a result, my first attempt is so bogged down in the explanations of things like notation and definitions that it proved counterintuitive.

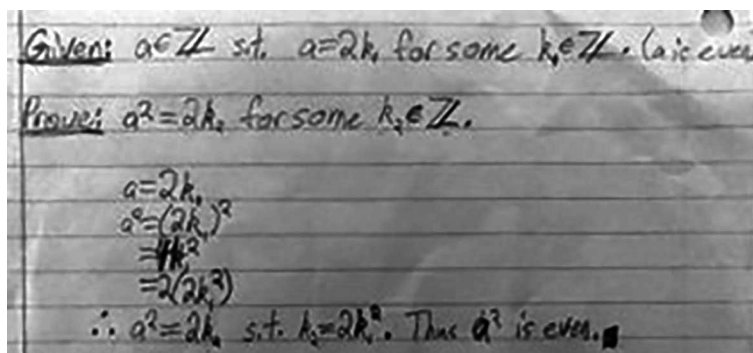


Figure 2: A handwritten proof that is the informal counterpart to the formal proof in the appendix of the article. Note the abundance of shorthand symbols within the text of the proof.

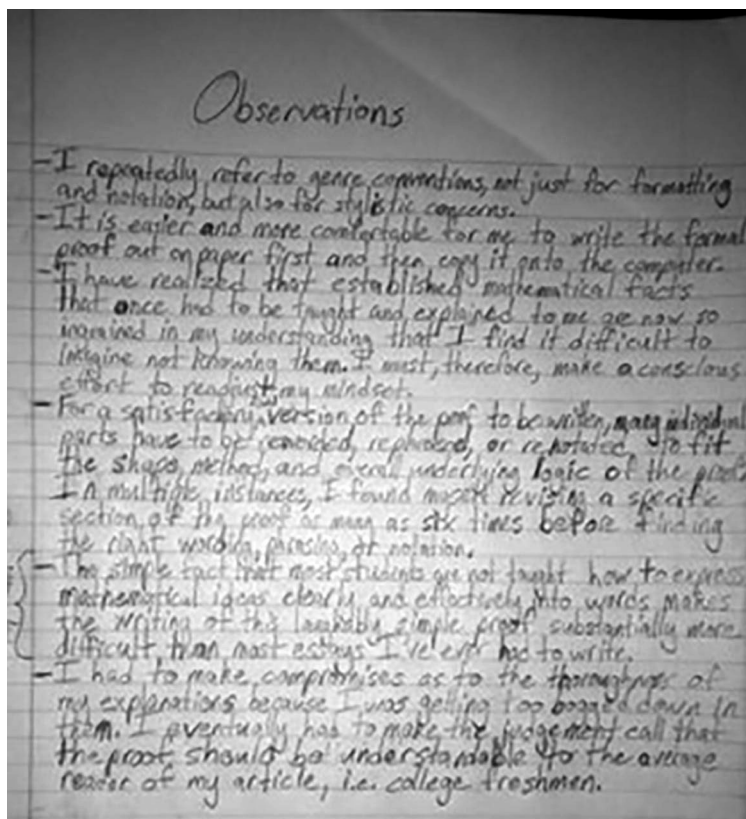


Figure 3: A list of my observations written throughout the process of writing the proof. These are observations about the writing process itself, not about the proof in question.

This approach made the proof as a whole messier and more riddled with confusing digressions that interrupted the flow of the logic presented. I therefore resolved that my approach was flawed and decided that not every little aspect of the proof needed careful explanation. This made the writing process much easier and the final proof easier to read.

This planning process brings us back to CHAT yet again. It is a clear example of representation, as defined by Walker: “The term ‘representation’ highlights issues related to the way that the people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it” (Walker, p. 75) This also ties rather neatly into distribution, which “involves the consideration of who a text is given to, for what purposes, using what kinds of distribution tools” (Walker, p. 75). As I explained, my first consideration was that my proof be approachable to the mathematical layman, but this mindset was, in the end, unconstructive and counterintuitive. I therefore reasoned that I should construct the proof to be understandable for the average college student, in consideration of the intended audience of this article. This conclusion was perhaps the most

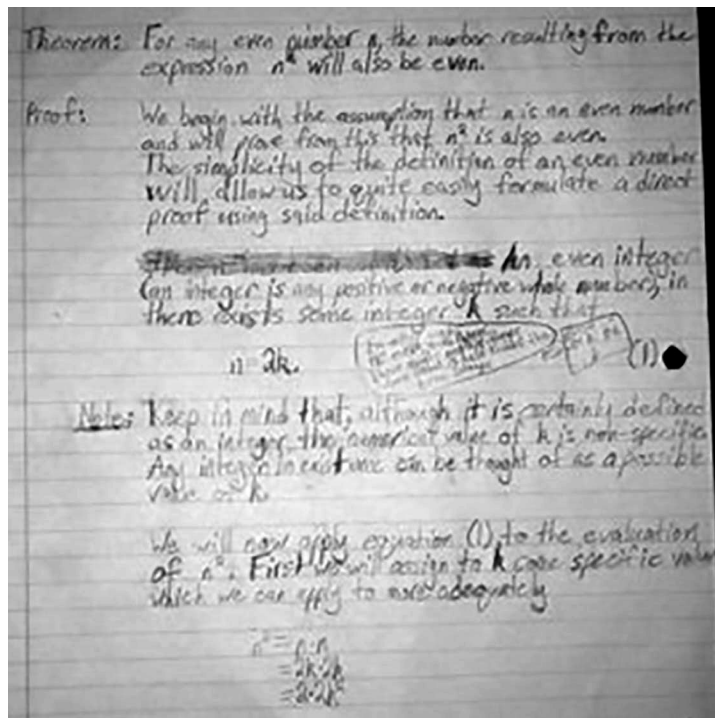


Figure 4: My first attempt at this mathematical proof. As can be seen, this draft was far more focused on explaining every detail, and, as a result, each step in the logic quite simply failed to flow seamlessly into the next.

relevant to the purpose of CHAT because it forced me to consider my proof, not only as a mathematical text but also as a small part of the construction of this article. It therefore helped me to view my writing process in the correct context and, in turn, improved the overall quality of my mathematical writing.

Conclusion

Why did I write this article? A strange question to ask within the article itself, but the answer comes in multiple parts and is very important to the main topic of this journal. It's why I devoted an entire section to the problem of teaching and learning proofs, and it's why I made repeated assertions to their absolute necessity, as well as to the importance of the actual *writing* involved in proof writing. I even included an interview with a professional mathematician to emphasize both of those last two points. And it all boils down to this:

As a mathematics major, I never thought that I'd ever find myself writing something as involved and lengthy as this article. If you had told me, even as recently as the beginning of the semester, that I'd not only write a journal article spanning more than ten pages but that I'd volunteer to do so of my own free will, I'd have laughed in your face. I'm far too much of a perfectionist about my own academic writing to actually enjoy doing it. But, if anything, this only reinforces my point. Because the answer to the question asked at the beginning of this section is that I wanted to teach, to the freshmen who will read this in English 101, the lesson that I wish I had been taught at their age, instead of having to learn it myself as an upperclassman: that, no matter your major or career choice, as much as I'd like for this not to be the case, there is a certain amount of writing that will be required of you. As strange as it may seem, even in a field like mathematics, quality writing skills are essential to your future career. And that leads me to the second part of my answer.

The other reason that I wrote ten-plus pages about mathematical proof writing is to make a point to the freshman math majors who read this. It doesn't matter whether you like them or not; a good deal of the math courses you will take past calculus will require you to familiarize yourself with multiple proofs. Proofs are everywhere in mathematics, and they're really not all that scary. *But I strongly encourage you to not only practice formulating proofs but writing them as well.* The writing of a mathematical proof is like anything else in either writing or math, and indeed in life, in that it gets better and easier with practice.

In a very real way, writing a mathematical proof is more akin to writing an essay than solving a math problem. In fact, since the proof has to be figured out before it can be formally written, the actual writing of a mathematical proof takes place *after* the problem has already been solved. The only thing left to do at that point is to explain the solution in writing. And said writing is no less a part of the field of mathematics than the numbers and equations. Because, as I learned over the course of this entire semester, I was, until now, ignorant of the true definition of mathematics. As Dr. Chebolu explained in my interview with him, mathematics isn't just numbers and calculation: it's the analytical representation of ideas. And it's not complete without the communication and translation of those ideas from numbers and symbols into words. In other words, even mathematicians need to know how to write. And this article is the proof.

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Appendix

Below is the final version of the proof that I wrote for the purpose of writing this article.

Theorem. The square of any even number is also an even number.

Proof: We assume that a number a is an even number. We will construct a direct proof by showing, given this assumption, that a^2 is also even, using the definition of an even number.

An integer a is even if and only if there exists some other integer k such that

$$a = 2k \tag{1}$$

By squaring both sides of equation (1), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} a^2 &= (2k)^2 \\ &= 2^2 \times k^2 \\ &= 4k^2 \\ &= 2(2k^2) \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Since k is an integer, $2k^2$ must also be an integer. Thus, equation (2) fits the definition of an even number. Therefore, when a is an even number, a^2 must also be an even number.

Special Thanks

I would like to thank the ISU professors without whom I could not have completed this article:

- To Dr. Chebolu: for our very insightful interview.
- To Dr. Zhao: for introducing me to the story of the discovery of irrational numbers.
- And finally, to Dr. Marshall: for encouraging me to pursue this endeavor to completion, for her unwavering belief in my writing ability, and for her flexibility and patience in allowing me the time I needed to write the article to the rather exacting standards that I stubbornly insist on holding myself to.



Jonathan Sabin is a senior at Illinois State University where he previously studied Music Education before changing his major to General Mathematics. He is still a greatly skilled concert trombonist and remains active in the ISU School of Music. After graduating, Sabin intends to pursue a career in voice acting. Oh, he also grudgingly admits to being halfway decent at academic writing.

Grassroots Literate Activity Interview: Voting in the 2018 Illinois Midterms

Heather Sanford Interviews Drew Sanford

Introduction: Who Is Drew Sanford?

The 2018 Illinois Midterms were a struggle for me and my husband, Drew. We had only recently moved to the state, and our understanding of Illinois politics extended about as far as the tangent the guy from Xfinity went on as he installed our internet. If there was one thing we learned from that interaction, it was that the political climate in tiny, conservative Normal, IL, was going to be very different from what we experienced in the larger and much more liberal community of Kalamazoo, MI.

Did we feel a bit overwhelmed? Were we feeling smaller than ever in this brand-new place, with brand-new political representatives and candidates, and brand-new political tensions to wrap our minds around? Were we tempted to skip this election and hope we'd be better prepared for the next election? Absolutely! But we also understood that every vote matters in an election, and that it was our responsibility to our new community to become informed voters. In this interview, I ask Drew to consider how the voting ballot that he submitted at a voting booth in Normal, IL, fits into the larger activity system of the 2018 Illinois Midterm elections.

Going to the Polls

In this section, Heather asks questions for Drew to answer as they talk about his individual role in the voting process.

1. Considering the act of voting as a literate activity, how would you categorize the type of writing that was produced?

Formal, simple, and personal, from what you were describing. These were affecting me directly, or like things I care about. The text was through formal means, like with the ballot.

2. What genre, or genres, of writing did you produce during this voting process?

Argumentative, I guess. I'd call it basic since I can't clarify in any way that I'm voting for a politician or a circuit judge because of X or Y. It's an all-or-nothing sort of thing, right, unless you call and protest specific actions the politician makes afterwards.

3. Think of *genre* as the actual type of text that was produced. Did you have to produce any text during the process of voting?

Oh, right. I produced my ballot.

4. What were the tools you had to use to produce your ballot?

I used a pen to mark the ballot, and I used the ballot itself, of course. I guess the registry machine is also something. It's all involved in the process, but the ballot is the most important since it's what I communicate through.

5. What specific tool would you say was the most powerful in this activity? Why do you think so?

I would say my pen was most important in producing the final text. It was incomplete until I actually put my pen to it.

6. Did you do any research before heading to the voting booth?

I used the Internet to research candidates for deal breakers first, things I could not stand. Then researched those without deal breakers further for my favorites. I used a bunch of sites to figure out who I wanted, like <http://www.smartvoter.org/voter/judgecan.html>. I narrowed it a good bit by finding positions I couldn't support regardless of other positions. With that out of the way, I checked on the platforms of each candidate on their individual website, and any claims they made, I tried to find info on either <https://www.factcheck.org> (for higher profile claims) or local news. I find checking incumbent politicians' voting records through Congress.gov is pretty valuable, too.

7. Even though we have all these great resources available for researching candidates, were there any points at which your research was a bit of a struggle?

In some cases, when I *wanted* to produce my text with research behind it: judicial courts, for example, have a very limited amount of information readily available. I tried looking at VoteForJudges.org, for instance, but even though it sounded promising, I didn't find it very helpful.

8. Were there any other limitations in your part of producing this text? I'm thinking about time constraints, location, things like that.

It wasn't difficult for me, but I did have to be there on November 6th between probably 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. I also had to make it to my voting place, which was only about a mile away from my home, and luckily transportation wasn't an issue for me. I had to know my name, also not hard, and would need to produce ID if there was doubt (though I think that's illegal). I needed to be able to read and follow directions as written, which was not a personal limitation.

Preparing the Ballot

Here, Heather continues her interview with Drew as they consider everything that had to happen in order for Drew and his ballot to both make it to the voting booth.

9. Thinking about the production of the ballot outside of your specific interaction with it, how did the text actually come into being? Take your best guess.

I assume that the physical ballot was produced in a secure Secretary of State building, where the SOS employees took into account written records of what to include on the ballot. A printer was used to mass produce ballots based on these written records, which detailed those who were running and proposals to include on the ballot. Here's a link to the ACE Project Electoral Knowledge Network if you want to know more about the specifics of this process: http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vo/voc/voc02/default/mobile_browsing/onePag

10. What people were involved in producing your ballot?

Myself, in being present and doing research. My family, and people across the nation, in a similar way.

11. You're referring to other people who had an influence on the way you voted?

No, I misunderstood. What I mean to say is I was influenced by a chain of biases. Since everyone has bias and trouble stating facts and ideas with genuine neutrality, you're bound to not have genuine fact. My sources of information could omit or misconstrue info (I'm sure by accident) and my vote could be affected.

12. Think about the people on the other side of this text being produced—who else had to be involved for that ballot to make it into your hands?

Of course, the Secretary of State, like I was saying. I think the candidates are a big part of it as well. Let's take someone running for governor, for example, like J.B. Pritzker—just voted in, right?—the governor needs to do a LOT of paperwork, including a petition to even apply for the position and a number of other things within 90 days of declaring. More information about the processes Pritzker had to follow to run for office can be found here: https://www.runforoffice.org/elected_offices/22242-governor-of-illinois

13. What kinds of writing or writing skills were necessary for the ballot to be produced?

I only needed to know how to read and fill in bubbles.

14. What about the person or people who actually had to write the content of the ballot? Do you think they needed to use any particular kinds of writing skills in order to do that?

I mean they had to know the rules of formatting per legal restrictions in the ballot. There's probably a lot there. You have to use this particular color here, this font, and this spacing. They had to follow a template exactly and work with the possibility that candidates might change last-second.

15. Earlier we talked about potential limitations and obstacles that you personally had to consider throughout the process of voting. What about struggles that might have had to be overcome by the folks who were in charge of the initial production of the ballot, before it even reached your hands? Take your best guess.

You could have a last-minute problem with ballots. I can just imagine the printers screwing up and deciding you're gonna have a bad time. There are gonna be more eggs in the basket too even after the printing is done—transporting and processing, for example. I'm sure that web link from the ACE Project Electoral Knowledge Network can provide more information on that.

Beyond the Booth

What are the more covert factors that can influence how a ballot is produced or the way a person chooses to vote? These are the ideas Heather and Drew explore in this section of the interview.

16. What does voting do in the world? Specifically, how did your vote in the 2018 Illinois Midterms affect various communities?

Going by those terms we were talking about, I'd say it's more community-related. I hear people talk about local elections like, "Oh that doesn't really affect me either way," which is obviously wrong. Look at Illinois. We had the chance to vote for someone whose promises ("promises") could make a dramatic change. Legalized recreational marijuana? Lighter gun control? Increasingly available low-cost healthcare? Those were some of the many things on the table between Pritzker, Rauner, and other possible governors. But it's more than just local, right? The 2018 election was also for state representatives. You know what they do, they keep the executive branch on its toes. Going back on topic, though, my communities have a lot riding on every election. The only people who won't be affected are those already in power. And they stay in power when people don't vote. Looking at the gubernatorial election, Rauner was governor for four years before Pritzker was elected, and Rauner could very well have been elected again if people hadn't moved to vote, and vice versa if you wanted Rauner to stay as an incumbent.

17. Who would you say had the most control over the way your ballot was ultimately produced?

I had minimal control over the activity. I would argue corporations had the greatest control because they chose who was on the final ballot. I could have filled in the other category in certain places but was ultimately discouraged in my research that write-ins are never elected. I mean, looking at even a Wikipedia article, there's a clear problem (here's the one I'm talking about: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Write-in_candidate). Sure, there are instances where write-ins have been a success, but it's actually just a drop in the ocean compared to how many elections have happened in the past eighty years. Look at the past couple decades, it's barely been a successful thing to do. It's worthwhile if you're passionate about it, certainly, but chances are just dismal.

18. That's interesting. Can you dig into that a bit more?

I hold the contentious belief that we are no longer a true democracy, but rather more like a plutocracy, where the wealthy are able to choose which candidates come into power and who ends up on the sidelines. One recent example is that the Democratic National Committee chose to support Hillary Clinton as their final candidate despite Bernie Sanders's vast support. I agree the system was "rigged" to support Hillary Clinton because she has proven that she has her Political Action Committees' (PACs) interests at heart and they didn't want a wild card to face the Republican candidate. Even when

I cast my vote and establish my written text therein, I am doing so at the behest of the wealthy.

19. What about the democratic process? Do you think that was upheld through the activity of voting?

As I said, I don't think we have a true democracy. Nonetheless, as much as what I did resembles democracy, I think the system as it is remains in place thanks to me taking part in it.

20. Would you say that's a good thing or a bad thing?

I would say, for the most part, that it's a good thing. Even though the process is corrupt in a lot of ways, this is the system that we have, and exercising the voice I have in that system is important. If I don't use my voice, if I don't use the power that the system grants me, then I am forfeiting some of my ability to shape our system and advocate for myself and my communities.

Pro-Tips for First-Time Voters

In this final section, Drew reflects on the overall experience of voting in the 2018 Illinois Midterms and provides some helpful insight for first-time voters.

21. Did you learn anything from the process of voting?

I learned how my ballot was interpreted by whether or not my candidates were elected, or if the policies I voted for were taken into effect.

22. What about the election results? What can be learned from those, beyond just who was elected and who wasn't?

It's difficult to say. I can say that I know my vote might have been of significant consequence, because more than one person I voted for came into office. We can learn that, at least at face value, the people of Illinois believe in unions, the legalization of recreational marijuana, and socialist healthcare. However, speaking directly of the elected governor, people might also just see him as the lesser of two evils.

23. What are some things that first-time voters might need to know before heading to the polls?

I would tell a first-time voter: you have to do your research as early as you can. You can't just start digging in a couple weeks before the election and expect you'll be well informed. First thing you gotta do though is know your voter rights, federal and stateside. Some places that do that are <https://>

ballotpedia.org/Voting_in_Illinois and https://ballotpedia.org/Voting_policies_in_the_United_States. Make sure you're registered at least a month before Election Day, and check again a week before. It sucks, but you really don't want to find that you're in danger of being unable to vote because someone screwed up. Really, really, though, make sure you have all the information you can get. Most politicians have something they don't want you to know, and you can't rely on mudslinging commercials or conspiracy theories to get to the truth (usually).

24. Are there any obstacles that first-time voters, or voters in general, should be aware of when it comes to the voting process?

It's always been a problem, but more so recently, that voter suppression has come into play. People should be aware of their rights, federal and local, when it comes to voting. I know through Facebook of some places, such as in Prairie View, Texas, where people with "different" (read "likely to be PoC") names were given difficulties, having their names registered incorrectly or put into question to keep them from voting. It's especially dangerous if you're Indigenous. Just look at the underhanded stuff North Dakota is trying to pull, requiring an accurate address for identification in voting, when many folks living on reservations don't have such a thing: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45986329>

25. Was there any knowledge or were there any skills that you gained through the process of voting in the 2018 Illinois Midterms that could be useful in the future?

I learned more about actual candidates' policies, like J.B. Pritzker. His promises against Rauner's for "universal healthcare" and job creation projects, and my district (District 18) helped me understand the situation in this state. You learn a lot about the people around you when the winners' names get announced; you get an idea of what matters to them and what concerns them.

26. How about the democratic process? Do you feel like you gain anything by participating in it?

I could drone on: "It's your civic duty to vote whenever able!" And sure, that's true. But it's not really my motivation, not what I get out of it, you know. Honestly, I mostly appreciate that—and it happens every time I take part in the process—I learn the lies. Politicians are well-versed in blowing smoke, like it's their art. But every time I do the research, I learn a little more. Every time I see how the politician actually acts when elected, I learn some more. And I think the same can . . . generally . . . be said about voters as a whole. We are slowly learning each time we participate: informed is better, and we're learning exactly what informed means to us.



Heather Sanford is a graduate student studying Children's Literature at Illinois State University. She enjoys rainy days and yelling at the television.



Drew Sanford is a graduate student in the Museum Studies program at Johns Hopkins University. He enjoys writing short stories and playing Dungeons and Dragons.

Mission Critical: The Literate Activity Systems of the McLean County YWCA

Charles Woods & Vicki Hightower

Professional Literacies Project: In this edition of the Professional Literacies Project, Charles Woods sits down with Vicki Hightower, who works for the McLean County YWCA, a non-profit organization in Bloomington, Illinois, that provides services to members of the community. She discusses the complex literate activity system of the professional writing she does on a day-to-day basis, which includes interacting with co-workers, communicating with funders and other partnering entities, and writing grants which fund the programs for the chapter of the YWCA for which she works.

- 1. Vicki, could you explain a little bit about your journey, through college to the current point in your career? I know you have worn a lot of different hats, so feel free to go through that with as much as you want to share.**

I grew up south of Bloomington in Robinson, Illinois, so I went to junior college at Lincoln Trail Junior College there. I came here for my final two years at ISU, graduated with a Bachelor's of Education, Elementary Education with a minor in Special Education. I went right into teaching in the Streator, Illinois area and taught sixth grade for two years at a Catholic school there, and then moved on to Ransom, Illinois, where I taught fourth, sixth, and seventh grade reading and social studies and coached all of their sports. What brought me to ISU originally was softball, so I had a sports background. I really loved that.

At that time, I needed to make a decision: my life had changed to the point where the school I was at had no benefits. So, I took this test with the state, passed with an A and was able to work for Dwight Correctional Center as a Recreation and Leisure specialist. That meant that every free moment

that any of the women inmates had, I was filling it with activities. So, that was about three years of doing that. At the same time, I was coaching Special Olympics, so my passion for people with disabilities was still there, so I was approached to help start working when they were opening homes in Peru, Illinois, for a group home for developmentally disabled adults and mentally ill adults. I did that work for fifteen years; the last eight of those back in Normal where I was the first executive director for Homes of Hope. I help start that agency and did that for eight years. I decided I didn't want to do twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week anymore—I needed a break—so I looked for a job that had a lot of meaning to me, and the mission of YWCA drew me, and so I started over there as the Director of Senior Services. I did that for five-and-a-half years, the last two-and-a-half of those I was made the vice president of the organization.

Then I wanted to do another career move, something a little different. I started working over in Peoria at Goodwill Industries writing their homeless veterans program, putting homeless vets back to work. I was approached by YWCA (because I still lived in Bloomington) to see if I would contract to write a grant—I had done a lot of grant writing in my past. I guess they were trying to find someone who wrote grants, and the new president said, “Well, who writes grants here?” And they said, “Well, Vicki Hightower, but she doesn't work here anymore.” So, they actually reached out to me, contracted with me to write a grant, then had an opening, and I've been back there now for five-and-a-half years. So that's a long journey to come full circle back to YWCA.

That must be fulfilling though.

It is. It is. I hated going. It was just a decision I needed to make, but the mission has always drawn me back. The work that we do there—and now the opportunity has shifted so that I can do a lot of grant writing for all the work that we do—so that passion is there, and I love doing that.

2. Could you explain what you do in your current role as Senior Director of Adult Services at the YWCA?

So, it has changed, especially in the last two years. I serve as the director for the retired senior volunteer program. It's a federal grant-funded program that also receives state funding. It's matching adults fifty-five (years old) and older who want to volunteer for not-for-profits in McLean County. So, we've got just under 500 volunteers we match with about fifty different not-for-profits. That's a primary role that I serve. The rest of my work is as a grant writer for the whole organization. So I write for all the different departments—federal, state, local grants, whatever we need. I am the volunteer coordinator for YWCA and I do a little HR-oriented stuff.

3. What role does your position play in the hierarchy of the organization?

There are three senior directors, so our programs are divided into three sections. I take care of anything to do with adults and especially seniors. Then, the other key component is that I am the only official grant writer for the organization, so all departments come to me for that. We have a president, a vice-president, and then three senior directors, so that is how the hierarchy works.

4. In that role, on a daily basis, what all kinds of writing do you do?

A little bit of everything. You do your traditional e-mails—both internal and external—and then you do a lot of letter writing. We do a lot of thank you notes because we get a lot of donations. I do a lot of those. A good part of my day is grant writing or grant reporting. So, the grants that we have received, reporting on those grants. A lot of it would also be following our budget, keeping that up to date. We have a lot of collaborations with our grants, so I have to be in contact with those other partners making sure we keep all our information. Just another typical day. I don't have one day that is the same, though.

5. Do you like that about your job?

I do. I think that if I had what I would call a mundane job—same thing day after day after day—I don't know if I would enjoy that as much.

6. How does the kind of writing you do now in your career match up with the kinds of writing you were asked to do in your college science and education courses? Whether specific courses or just more generally, during your undergraduate experience. And then, are there things now that you didn't anticipate having to do or which function differently than you assumed they might?

Sure. I would think the main comparison would be with research writing and general narratives. So, back in my high school and college days, I wrote a lot of term papers—a lot of those kinds of papers—and grant writing is a lot of that. A lot of that narrative, researching, quoting, and showing where you get your stats from. I think—in the education piece—a lot of the writing is similar when I have to do scheduling and develop curriculum. I've done a lot of training, so trying to put training plans together is almost like writing a lesson plan. I think I learned my organizational skills and how to break things down in detail through my courses in school.

The question on what I wish I maybe would have learned. . . . Since I had no idea I was going to be doing grant writing, I probably would have taken more writing courses, because I just took the basic English courses that you needed to take as our initial requirements. But, if I would have known how much writing was involved in the work I'd be doing, I definitely would have paid more attention to that and, really, learned more styles of writing. I've had to teach myself and research how to write in different styles of writing. I think courses would have helped me a lot.

7. It sounds like you've had to learn—and obviously taught yourself—how to write in several different kinds of genres. How did you navigate these new writing situations in your career? Was there a lot of training, or did you have to learn to do it on the fly? I guess that is dependent on where you were working.

Right, a lot of it was on the fly. But, finding people who were knowledgeable . . . you have to remember, I went to school in the 1970s, so we didn't have computers. That was a huge difference in style, and I learned the hard way that people can't tell your tone based on your writing. So, really figuring out words and how you're wording things and where exclamation points are important or capital letters, it all changed the whole way to communicate. That people even next door to each other in the building will want to communicate via the written word instead of just going and talking to each other, that was a whole new learning thing and that was on the fly. After it didn't go well, then you correct it a little bit. So, lesson learned.

But, a lot of the more technical things, I tried to find people who had that experience and I just tried to learn from them, almost doing mini-internships with peers and mentors I've had through the years.

An excellent approach, I'd say.

Yes, and it works because you also learn the things that you don't enjoy, like with one supervisor who was my mentor, there were some things that I didn't appreciate, and I learned in that aspect that I didn't want to do it that way. So, I adjusted on my own to say, "Maybe I would prefer to do it this way." And that is kind of my style.

8. What kinds of tools do you use to communicate at work? Platforms, technologies, things like that.

It's kind of humorous because I always tell people, "If it's technology, I'm probably going have to be taught that again." I have learned to do PowerPoint and some of those things; I'm not as comfortable with that as

some of the younger people coming through are. Even my grandkids are learning in second grade how to do PowerPoint, so they teach me some things.

Definitely, [I use] a computer. I'm still amazed by just the facts you know. How does that even work, you know? When they came about, I was like, "What is this thing?" All of a sudden, less paper. But, we do—even the other positions that I work closely with—we have electronic signage that we use to get the word out. We've had to learn new ways to reach applicants, to try to get people to apply for our jobs. So, all the different ways we've done that, whether developing flyers, or through newspapers or job fairs, or electronic signage, it's amazing all of the different things that we do.

One of the [things] I did during the presentation [today] was outlining all the different ways we can get one message out because we work with every age group. I'm fortunate to be in an organization that has departments, so I take things to them and they use the technology and do it for us. We have a lot of interns who come, so we pick their brains and use a lot of their technology. They do our website and keep it updated.

9. Who are you writing for most of the time? Do you deal a lot with external audiences, or are you mainly corresponding internally? How does communicating with different people—internal to the YWCA, and then externally—affect the way you write?

I would say on a daily basis the majority of my work is internal, whether that just be passing information on to others, asking questions, or gathering information when I am writing a grant. But when I am doing grant writing, it is for our clients: it's for the people we serve. So that can be anywhere from our children who are six months to twelve years of age to all the way up our adults, who might be 100. We have different clientele, trying to adapt to who the funder is, to whom I am writing. We also have a lot of partnerships, and so there is that type of writing. But the day-to-day piece, is the forty e-mails that will come in, and they are all internal.

Again, I am trying to figure out how I am going to get the result for whatever I am requesting. Whether that is a partnership, funds, or just an answer to a question, and trying to figure out how best to get something quickly. Everyone needs to be quick. So I don't have a lot of time after asking for something if people need deadlines, especially with so much e-mail correspondence. If I need something Thursday, I have to be exact, or else it will just get lost in the shuffle. A big component for me on changing how I talk is whether or not I am talking with my seniors that I work with. So,

I have everyone from fifty-five to people in their nineties. Some don't have internet access, some don't hear well on phone calls, so that changes things. I have to go back to the snail mail and mail things out. If you send something out in the mail, you have to make sure you send it out well in advance to match up with those who will get it immediately on the internet, so everyone is getting information at the same time.

10. Who has power over the way you write? Are there standards set by the organization, or does it more depend who you are working for specifically? Are there legal regulations about the writing?

Absolutely. Especially if you are posting on Facebook or any social media, we have very strict guidelines on what we can post. On your personal pages you have to have disclaimers that this is your personal opinion and not a representation of the organization. There are all sorts of guidelines just associated with social media.

When it comes to grant writing, it really is funder mandates that affect how I am going to write something. Another component, too, when I am writing is, we have so many programs that have confidentiality laws, so you have to be careful. Really, for the most part, it's following what's established by whichever funder or source.

Considering programs that have a confidential component to them, that would extend to images of those people, too.

Absolutely. We have to have press releases and all these things in place before you can post a photograph of someone. Even in your childcare, if you have a group shot, you have to figure out which kids can be in the photo, and there are a lot of things that go into that. Even just the writing of names, you can't list names. It does change that: you can't just write whatever you want to write.

But, the grants really have strict requirements. You talk about number of words, number of characters, the font size, bullet points, and what they expect to find, it can really drive my writing.

11. What are some of the impacts of your writing? In other words, what does success look like in your writing tasks?

Getting the money. Being awarded the grant, that would be one component. The other piece is just having whatever I have written be well received, whether that be internal communication that everyone understood;

that I was clear. I try to make sure that I'm clear in what I am trying to get across, that I don't have a whole bunch of words messed up.

I used to tell people who I supervised, when you walk out of the room, you should know what I was feeling. You shouldn't question, "Well, I wonder, did she mean that?" I try to be clear and exact, and that is successful for me in communication. But in grants, it's all about if we got the grant!

12. How do mechanics, style, grammar, and spelling factor into the success of your writing? Do you think about this much?

I think I probably think about it more than others, because I try to be so exact with grants, and it does carry over into other communication. Like texting, I text in complete sentences with correct grammar and all the words spelled out. No short cuts, because that's how I typically write, so it does carry over into all the different types of work that I do. I am very careful about making sure words are spelled correctly, when people aren't even looking for that.

I think the teacher comes out as well. I always say, "Don't make me get my red pen out," for the e-mail that you sent . . . my eye is drawn to errors and everything. It's funny because I don't think that I'm thinking about it, but a memo comes to me, and I always tell people, "Don't send anything out with my name on it until I've looked it over because I don't want it to have grammatical errors or misspelled words." That is very important to me.

There is no worse feeling, from my experiences, than sending an e-mail and then re-reading it a day later and seeing that grammatical mistake.

Yes! Grammatical—or autocorrected mistakes—where you really sounded quite foolish.

13. If you were new again, at this job at the YWCA, what are some of the kinds of writing you might wish you were taught specifically?

We do a lot of board reports and proposals to our funding sources and partnerships, so I think learning how to word things for those types of audiences. I'm not sure if there are other things I didn't learn prior to coming [to YWCA]. Most of the things I already knew, but the different styles—because we have a regular board of directors, we have a foundation, so there are different people, and really learning the ins and outs of what they're looking for—that would be helpful.

When you were talking, I was thinking about how we use Outlook for our e-mail platform, so I bet there was a learning curve there.

Everything that we have done has changed since I first came [to YWCA]. But, yes, Outlook was a huge learning thing. I think the big joke there now is that I am trying to understand this “cloud” because I am not sure where anything is going. For me, I am still one of those who prints off any work that I have done because I don’t trust that it will still be there. You know, I’ve seen some crashes, though, so I always have that paper copy as well. But they tell me it’s in the cloud, so that’s the new thing I am learning now.

14. Let me ask you about that. Does YWCA have a cloud storage program that they teach or promote to workers there to save their stuff?

They are getting to that. We have a server and an IT company that teaches us a lot about some of these things. But, with anything new, you go through an educational process. I’m a little slower than others because I am one of those people who is like: I need to see it.

15. One of the things I have heard you mention today was about passion. After knowing you for a few hours, I can already tell it’s not about the job, and it’s not about the paycheck. It’s about the mission, and finding the mission that works with your passion. Could you offer, perhaps, advice or a comment to undergraduate and graduate students who might be reading this interview, or listening to it, about how they might match their passion with a mission?

I can tell when it’s a match when there hasn’t been a day I didn’t want to come in to work, no matter how stressed. As a not-for-profit, we have gone through tremendous downs as well as heights, but I mean, because of our state budget, we had all these issues going on. It was still, “Let’s work together and figure this out.” So, then you realize that it is more than the job.

If I can help a little bit here, maybe this child will get something, or this senior might get something. I do think it is a matter of finding what—when your eyes wake open in the morning and you think about what you’re getting ready to go do—will get you energized to get you out of bed. You don’t have to hit your snooze eight times. That has helped me in making decisions when I have changed careers.

But on a day-to-day basis, when my eyes pop open and I am ready to go to work, then I know that I am doing more than just a job. And so, I think if you can find that, it makes time go faster, it gives you things to talk about. I think that makes life much easier. It's never—obviously—about the money, or I wouldn't be at a not-for-profit, you know, but I couldn't imagine doing anything other than the type of work that I do.



Charles Woods is a third-year Ph.D. student at Illinois State University. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Charles graduated with a Master's of Arts degree from the University of Montevallo. His academic focus is in rhetoric, writing studies, and technical communication. More specific interests include research in digital rhetoric at the intersection of identity formation, ethics, and Big Data. He currently serves as a graduate fellow for the Computers and Composition Digital Press, as well as on the Kairos PraxisWiki Review Board. In his spare time, Charles enjoys spending time with his partner and their two pups, Stanley and Peter. Follow him on Twitter @charles_woods1 and listen to his podcast, *The Big Rhetorical Podcast*.



Vicki Hightower is the senior director of Adult Services at YWCA McLean County. She has worn many hats during her more than 11 years at YWCA including director of home care services, director of senior services, vice president of operations, and interim CEO/president. Vicki is passionate about working with older adults and helping them maintain their independence. In her current role she oversees RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), and has successfully written over one million dollars in grants since February 2018.

Vicki's career path started at Illinois State University with a bachelor's degree in science and education. Upon graduating she taught elementary school and was an athletic coach for junior high girls and she then transitioned to a recreation/leisure role at Dwight Correctional Center. Vicki spent more than a decade running group homes for developmentally disabled/mentally ill adults including serving as executive director for Homes of Hope in Normal, Illinois. Her experience then led her to working at Goodwill Industries as the Veterans' Services Manager where she assisted homeless and honorably discharged veterans in returning to the work force.

All of Vicki's roles have led her to increased responsibility, community outreach, and day-to-day operations of various types, but the common theme is service and dedication to others, which is a reflection of her devotion to humanity.

Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*

GWRJ Editors

Our Mission Statement

The *GWRJ* is dedicated to publishing articles by writers and scholars whose work investigates the practices of people writing (and acting) in different writing situations and in a variety of different genres. We encourage both individuals and groups to submit work that studies and explores the different ways that writers learn how to write in different genres and settings—not just within the boundaries of academia, but in all kinds of settings where writing happens.

Because we identify “writing research” as 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 first-person narrative, an informal conversation about writing, a formal study of writing, or even an artistic production could 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.

General Information

Submissions

Articles can be submitted to the *GWRJ* at any time. However, we do have deadlines for upcoming issues. For issue 11.1, which will come out at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester, articles must be submitted by January 20, 2020. The deadline for consideration in our 11.2 (Spring 2021) issue is May 20, 2020. Please contact the Managing Editor at grassrootswriting@gmail.com with queries about possible submissions and to submit your work.

Queries and Drafts

The *GWRJ* has a strong commitment to working with interested authors to help them prepare for publication. So if you think you have a good idea but

are not sure how to proceed, please contact us. One of our editorial staff will be happy to work with you one-on-one to develop your idea and/or article.

Honoraria

The *GWRJ* offers an honorarium of \$50.00 for each article published in a print issue of the *GWRJ*.

Style and 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 the following basic style criteria for authors to consider:

1. The readership of the *GWRJ* is writers. It is not “students,” even though the journal is used by writing instructors and students. (The *GWRJ* remains the primary text for Writing Program courses at Illinois State University, and it’s also used by teachers and students in other programs as well.) *GWRJ* articles should attempt to provide valuable content to writers who are engaged in the activity of “learning how to learn about” genres.
2. “Teacher narratives” are not acceptable as *GWRJ* articles. We are interested in 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. Language and style that is overly formal or “academic” may be unappealing to our readers.
4. 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 in which the focus is on the author’s learned expertise.) Authors should remember that no one “learns” a genre completely or in a completely simple way. So while writers (especially of first-person narratives) may write about successes, they need to complicate the genres with which they are working.
5. Tone or content that situates the reader as a certain kind of writer (whether as a master or novice) with certain kinds of shared experiences can be problematic because the readership of the journal constitutes a wide variety of writers with different writing abilities and experiences.
6. Whenever possible, articles should make use of published research about writing practices, but the research should be incorporated into the

text in a relevant and accessible way so that readers who are not used to reading scholarly research can still benefit from the references.

7. 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.

Media, Mode, and 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 with these technologies need to be careful about copyright issues as we cannot publish any kinds of materials that may result in copyright infringement. We can sometimes seek 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. We can, however, include materials that are covered by Fair Use; see <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html> for Fair Use guidelines.

Also, video/audio of research subjects can require special kinds of permission processes, so you should contact the *GWRJ* editors before beginning this kind of work. Research using subjects who are considered “protected” populations (people under eighteen and medical patients covered by HIPPA, among others) are not acceptable for *GWRJ* articles unless the author has received approval from Illinois State University or another institution to conduct research with human subjects.

Researching for *Grassroots*

What does it mean to “do writing research?” For the *GWRJ*, it means people observing, investigating, critiquing, and even participating in the activities that humans engage in that involve literate practice.

But what does it really mean? In more practical language, it means finding some situation where humans are doing things that involve language (which can mean composing in genres that are oral, aural, visual, etc., not just writing on paper) and thinking, “Hey, that looks interesting,” and then taking the time to investigate that practice in some detail.

But this kind of research isn’t just about people. It’s really about what we call “activity systems,” which just means that we want to learn about all kinds

of complicated interactions, not just what a particular kind of text looks like or what a particular person does when they produce a text (although we're interested in those things too). We also want to know about the interactions between people as they produce texts and the interactions between humans and their tools, practices, and different kinds of textual productions. And we're interested in how certain kinds of texts work to shape our interactions, for example, the ways the genre of resumes might shape how people interact when they engage in the activities of finding and offering work.

To help researchers who might be thinking about or engaging in literate practices that they'd like to investigate, we've created this list of the types of research projects that might be interesting or appropriate for the *GWRJ*:

Investigating Genres

These kinds of research projects usually investigate the nuances of particular genres: how they are made and who makes them, the distinctive features they have, who uses them, how and where they are used, and how they do particular kinds of communicative work in the world. This research is often straightforward, and, as some of the articles in our early issues reveal, this kind of genre investigation might have a "how-to" feel because many of the authors creating these pieces are also trying to learn how to produce that genre. However, genre investigations can move far beyond these "how-to" pieces. There are countless ways that genres can be examined in relation to how they do work in the world, including investigating technological and social implications that our readers would be interested in. Following genres to see where they go and the kinds of work they are made to do can take an author well beyond simply describing the features of a particular kind of text. One issue that is of concern to the *GWRJ* editors is that genre investigations can problematically "fix" genres, that is, situate them as stable productions that are always the same. So we encourage researchers to consider the ways that genres constantly move and shift over time and in different situations.

Personal Explorations of Literate Practice

This kind of research is often closely connected to genre investigations. Authors examine their own practices to discover how they have learned to produce certain kinds of writing in certain situations, or they investigate particular kinds of composing practices, such as different practices for engaging in research or revision. Like genre investigations, these kinds of projects sometimes have a "how-to" focus, as authors learn to think about and explain to others the things they know (or are coming to know) about different literate practices.

Composing Practices

This kind of research looks at particular kinds of composing practices, including invention (coming up with ideas), research, revision, etc. It often overlaps with personal exploration research because authors are often investigating their own practices. However, this research could certainly involve interviews or observations of how other individuals or groups engage in these practices. One issue that concerns the *GWRJ* editors is that this kind of research can lead to assumptions that these composing practices are “universal”—that is, that they work in similar ways across all kinds of genres and writing situations. While it is possible to trace similar kinds of literate practices across different situations (and, in fact, it can be really interesting—see, for example, Kevin Roozen’s writing research, “Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student’s Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes”), it is important to remember that we really can’t talk about an activity like “revising,” for example, as if it’s something that a person does the same way in every kind of situation.

Literate Activity in the Wild

While writing in classrooms or for school settings can often seem very cut-and-dried, these practices are really more complicated than they seem. Part of the reason we don’t see the complications of many kinds of literate practices is that once we become “embedded” in the activity, it no longer seems complicated to us! We know how to do it, but we don’t really remember how we learned to do it. Another reason that we sometimes miss the complications of writing is that there are “tropes” or particular ways of defining/understanding these practices that make them look simple and straightforward. An example of this is the activity of “writing a paper,” which can bring up very stylized and simplistic images of how a person just sits down, does some research, and then writes a paper for a particular class. But in fact, not only are the acts of researching and composing much more complicated than this limited view might offer, but also, this kind of literate practice is actually much more interactive than we might generally think. The *GWRJ* is interested in investigations that look at specific situations/locations where all kinds of literate acts are happening. We want to see researchers “unpacking” what is actually happening when people try to compose particular kinds of texts in particular situations. We are also interested in research that looks at the ways that textual production is interactive—how it involves all kinds of interactions between different people and different objects, tools, and other entities over time. This kind of research can involve the interactions of people and genres and different cultural norms and practices.

Case Studies of Individual Literate Practices

This type of research focuses very closely on particular individuals and the kinds of literate practices they engage in in their daily lives. Some of our previously published articles that take this approach include research into the ways an individual learns to interact with a particular genre or particular literate situation. But we are also very interested in research that looks at literate practice more broadly and deeply. So, for example, how does an individual take composing practices from one situation and apply them to another? How does an individual learn to interact within a particular setting in which different types of genres are being produced (so, say, a new kind of work environment)? This kind of research can be constructed as a collaborative process in which one researcher acts as an observer while the other engages in an exploration of his/her personal practices.

Linguistics Writing Research

Previous work that exists in the journal in this area tended to focus specifically on grammar conventions or on the usage of particular kinds of stylistic or punctuation devices. However, we have noted our desire to encourage linguistic writing research that is more robust and complicated, including projects that explore corpus linguistics (using a collection of data to look at particular kinds of textual practice) or sociolinguistics (investigating the particular ways that humans use language within social systems). In earlier issues we have seen authors take up this call in interesting ways. Issues 7.1 and 7.2, for example, include articles featuring research into the role of language variation and its effects on both meaning-making and composing practices. See Agathe Lancrenon's article "Everything You Need to Know About Transferring Metaphorical Ducks" and Cristina Sanchez-Martín's article "Language Variation Across Genres: Translingualism Here and There" in Issue 7.1. And, in issue 7.2, see Su Yin Khor's article "Multilingual Notes as a Tool to Understand Super Dense Readings." We look forward to continuing to publish additional studies that investigate these concepts in innovative ways.

Global or Intercultural Literate Practices

It is only within a few issues of the journal that the *GWRJ* has been able to publish research on literate practices as they move across cultural and/or geographical spaces. For examples, see Adriana Gradea's article in issue 3.2 ("The Little Genre that Could: CHAT Mapping the Slogan of the Big Communist Propaganda"), Summer Qabazard's article in issue 3.2 ("From Religion to Chicken Cannibalism: American Fast Food Ads in Kuwait"), Wesley Jacques' article in issue 7.1 ("The E-Cat's Meow: Exploring Activity Translingual in Mobile Gaming") or Sanam Shahmiri's article in

issue 7.2, (“Translating the Untranslatable: Making Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions Across Languages”). We would like to encourage more of this kind of research in future issues as we are highly interested in research that studies the ways that people and textual practices move across these kinds of boundaries.

The Researcher’s Process

According to one of our *GWRJ* authors, Lisa Phillips, it can be useful for authors to investigate and articulate a personal process that will be meaningful for them when developing ideas for research projects. She offered us her notes on the process that she followed to create her article for journal issue 3.1, “Writing with Tattoo Ink: Composing that Gets Under the Skin.” Her process is presented below in ten “steps” that *GWRJ* authors might find useful:

Step One

Come up with a general “topic” description. So the first question to answer is: “What is it about writing in the world that interests me?”

Step Two

As the process continues, think more specifically about the genre, setting, and/or specific practices under investigation. (Using the types of research we’ve listed above can be useful for focusing a topic.) So the second question an author might want to answer is: “How will I go about finding what I want to know?”

Step Three

Next, think about both the research practices that will be needed to gather data as well as the style of article that will be most appropriate. One excellent way to do this is to read existing articles and examine the different ways that authors have approached different topics and different kinds of research.

Step Four

Because *Grassroots* articles are a fairly unique kind of writing, authors may find it useful to consider past writing experiences that they might be able to draw on as they write. We call these “antecedent genres,” and they can be important to think about because these prior experiences always shape how an author writes, especially when he or she is writing in a new and unfamiliar

genre. While these antecedent genres will certainly be useful, they can also cause problems because aspects of an author's past writing may not exactly fit with the style, tone, or content that is appropriate for *GWRJ* articles. Some questions to ask here are: "What kinds of writing do I already know how to do that I can use to help me? How are they similar and how are they different?"

Step Five

It can also be important to think about "target genres," or types of writing that might be used as examples during the research and writing process. Obviously previously published *GWRJ* articles can be useful in this way, but it can also be interesting to think of other kinds of writing that might serve as examples. Writing research in the field of rhetoric and composition can be useful (for example, books and articles found on the WAC Clearinghouse Website at <http://wac.colostate.edu>), but other kinds of research into social practices or even different kinds of journalism can be used as interesting models.

Step Six

Consider what kinds of visuals a text might need. Visual examples of different kinds of writing can be crucial to add interest and information to a text, but copyright issues will need to be considered. Charts, graphs, or other illustrations that highlight important aspects of the data you've collected can also be important.

Step Seven

Thinking carefully about what information (data) is needed to make the article credible and useful for readers is a critical step. Thus, once an author has made decisions about the type of research he or she wants to do, it will also be important for him or her to make a plan for how to do that research. Will it be necessary to visit sites where writing is happening? Interview people about how they produce or use different kinds of writing? Find historical examples of types of writing?

Step Eight

If the article is going to include observations of people's writing activities or interviews or surveys, you'll need to obtain the proper permission. The interview/image consent form for *GWRJ* articles can be found on our website: <http://isuwriting.com/>.

Step Nine

Although the *GWRJ* doesn't require any particular style of citation, we do require that authors cite all of their information. The editors will help authors think about what needs to be cited and how it can be done, but authors will want to think about the best way to cite. This includes considering the different ways that citation works in different kinds of writing; for example, scholarly journal articles cite very differently than newspaper or magazine articles or blog posts. Sometimes the style of citation can really affect how a reader thinks about the information in an article, so it's important to think not only about what to cite, but also how to cite it.

Step Ten

As the text is being produced, it is critical to keep in mind the needs and interests of *GWRJ* readers. They are interested in reading about a wide range of topics, and they enjoy articles written in a wide range of styles. But since our readers have such a wide range of interests, it is important not to take them for granted. Writing that is interesting, lively, and accessible is important, but perhaps the most important thing to remember is that your research, no matter how it's presented, represents your knowledge and thinking about a topic related to writing that is important to you. And since we're all writers, and all of us are learning all the time about how to "do writing" in the world, sharing your knowledge is, ultimately, an act of community.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the journal or any of the articles, you can send queries to grassrootswriting@gmail.com. Part of our mission is to welcome and encourage all kinds of writing research, so if you have an idea that you want to develop, please don't hesitate to share it with us.

Works Cited

Roozen, Kevin. "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes." *Written Communication*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2010, pp. 318–54.

