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Locating Queer Rhetorics: Mapping as an Inventional Method

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Abstract

Because of the sheer abundance of scholarship employing spatial metaphors to trace Rhetoric and Composition's development, it feels disingenuous to argue that mapping has recently emerged as an important method for shaping and reshaping the field. However, much of this scholarship challenges the lay of the land by describing the discipline as a map (e.g., Glenn, 1995). In so doing, this work glosses the complexities involved in making *and* reading maps. More recently, Sullivan and Graban (2010), Tirrell (2012), and others have delved into these complexities by employing mapping technologies to visualize aspects of the field that get overlooked. We draw inspiration from both bodies of work in order to locate queer rhetorics in two maps: one visualizes published work, and the other marks where, when, and from whom dissertations emerged. In one sense, our maps conceptualize queer rhetorics as a landscape in order to complicate how published works define this area of inquiry. In another sense, discussing our processes for creating and reading these maps points toward the limited way we are able to extend this conversation and complete our project. Put simply, we argue that mapping is an inventional method and that maps are not an end in themselves. In order to raise questions for future research, we address how our maps locate (and dislocate) what they attempt to visualize.
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Keywords: Queer Rhetorics; Mapping; Map Making; Invention; Dissertations in Rhetoric and Composition; Queer Dissertations

This article chases one central, though complex, question: how do we locate queer rhetorics? In our attempt to answer to this question, we used Google Maps to trace a landscape for queer rhetorics, or LGBT studies and queer scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition. By employing mapping technology to illustrate when, where, and from whom this work emerged, we approach queer rhetorics as a vibrant area of inquiry that has changed shape over four decades. To that end, we provide two maps. The first visualizes queer rhetorics based on a bibliography composed by Jonathan Alexander and Michael J. Faris (2010) and posted to the college section of the National Council of Teachers of English website. On this map, each placemark represents the decade of publication, the university where the author(s) worked at the time of publication, and the authors themselves (see Figure 1). The second map locates queer rhetorics based on doctoral dissertations archived by ProQuest's Dissertation and Thesis Database.

Here, each placemark represents the decade the dissertation was filed, the degree-granting institution, and the author (see Figure 2). Because these maps juxtapose published scholarship with dissertation work, when taken together they complicate attempts to locate queer rhetorics. Still, the complexity of the landscape they create is rather limited as they represent only some of the data from slightly more detailed data sets. Prior to presenting our maps and discussing our process for visualizing queer rhetorics, we address the three areas of scholarship that influence our

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Figure 1. Map representing Alexander and Faris' (2010) bibliography. (http://tinyurl.com/okh6sdg)

approach: (1) work that defines queer rhetorics as an area of inquiry with a particular outlook and research agenda, (2) work that chronicles computers and writing's emergence as a field, and (3) work that uses mapping as a research method.

The first section, "Queer Rhetorics: When, Where, and By Whom," discusses how particular articles from scholarly journals shape our understanding of what queer rhetorics are and what they do. These articles define queer rhetorics by addressing common themes within and across journals, and we raise concerns about how this method relates to our project. While such work helps us visualize what it is that we are attempting to locate in our first map, both the map and the research to which we refer leave out a number of people and places. This section concludes with the definition of queer rhetorics that broadens our search, and we rely on this definition when invoking *queer rhetorics* throughout this article.

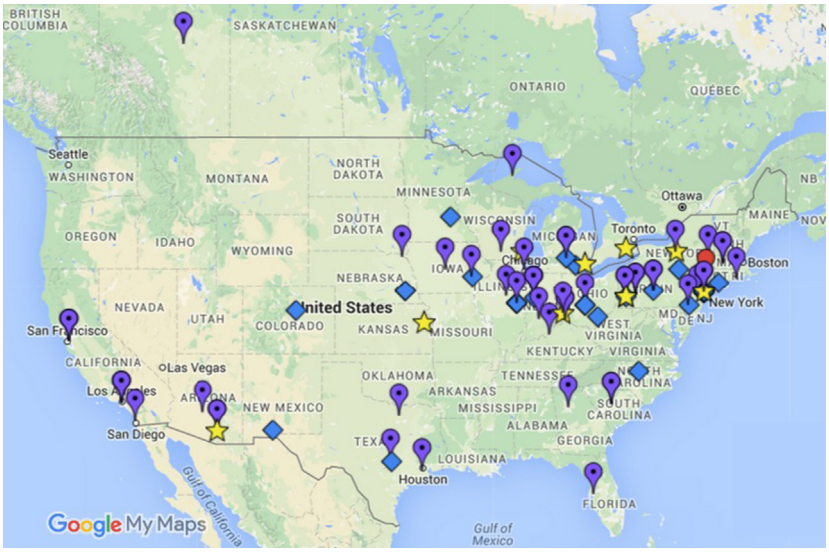

Figure 2. Map of doctoral dissertations on queer rhetorics from ProQuest's Dissertation and Thesis Database. (http://tinyurl.com/o9bns9k).

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