Letter from the Guest Editors

To provide some context for ourselves and our reasons for initially proposing this paired set of special issues celebrating 30 years of excellence in technology professional development for English and writing studies scholars, let us introduce ourselves and situate Computers in Writing Intensive Classrooms (CIWIC) and Digital Media and Composition (DMAC) with a bit of historical context.

1. Introductions

Cynthia L. Selfe is an original director of CIWIC at Michigan Technological University and DMAC at Ohio State University. She considers her primary contribution to the institute to be non-technological in nature. Rather, her strength lies in the ability to convince the very best and most creative graduate students and faculty in the profession to come to the institute; to add their many talents to the gathering each year; and, by continuing this effort over the period of three decades, to help the field of composition studies to come to terms, in productive and meaningful ways, with digital communication technologies.

From 1999 through 2001, Dànielle DeVoss served as the graduate research assistant for the CIWIC summer institute. Mentored by the highly capable and wonderful Tracy Bridgeford, DeVoss worked on the curricular, social, and infrastructural aspects of the workshop. In 2002, as a new faculty member at Michigan State University, DeVoss returned (along with colleagues Jeff Grabill and Ellen Cushman) to Houghton, Michigan, to attend the CIWIC–New Media institute hosted by Anne Frances Wysocki. In 2003, DeVoss was a presenter at CIWIC at Michigan Tech and a presenter at DMAC in 2006 when it had migrated to Ohio State University.

From 2001 through 2004, Cheryl Ball worked as the graduate research assistant for the summer institutes at Michigan Tech (there were three separate tracks of CIWIC by 2002). She shadowed DeVoss—who made the administration and teaching of a 2-week-long 30- to 40-person institute look easy, engaging, and professional—in 2001. Ball's favorite parts of CIWIC were teaching the new media poetics sessions and taking participants on tours of the Copper Country. In 2005, she returned to teach a session at the 20th-anniversary institute. At DMAC, from 2007 to 2011, Ball worked as an instructor—sometimes for the full 2 weeks, teaching design and assessment workshops, and other times popping in for a few days of consulting. Her favorite part of DMAC was sitting one-on-one with participants during the "Turning the Corner" workshops, helping them figure out how to take their multimodal project ideas and turn them into reality.

Scott Lloyd DeWitt had attended CIWIC–New Media with Anne Frances Wysocki in 2002, which allowed him to direct his attention toward re-imagining curricula and digital media production practices at The Digital Media Project in the Department of English at Ohio State University. After Cindy Selfe accepted a faculty position at Ohio State, the two of them began work transitioning CIWIC into DMAC; the first institute at Ohio State was in 2006. DeWitt has co-directed the institute each year with Selfe where he has taught audio and video production (including the "Concept in 60" project) and digital composition pedagogy.

2. A bit of historical context

As most readers may already know, Selfe (along with Billie Wahlstrom) conceived of and launched CIWIC at Michigan Technological University in 1986. They were responding to a complicated cultural context that is useful

to recall today: In that period of time, rapidly expanding efforts to experiment with computer use in U.S. English composition programs were gathering steam in the profession. Many of these efforts manifested themselves in sessions at the annual Computers and Writing Conference (the Computers and Writing Conference was in its fourth year when CIWIC started) and, increasingly, at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. The efforts of scholars and teachers who followed such work closely were challenged in these early days by conflicting departmental and institutional forces.

Some schools (and some deans and department chairs) understood computers as signs of cutting-edge teaching, and they exerted pressure on English departments and individual faculty to integrate these machines into their curricula as a way of visibly showcasing the forward technological thinking of their institutions; others saw no reason to deploy expensive technology in writing courses. In this fraught context, it is no wonder that some composition faculty perceived great promise in the machines and the ways in which they supported human communication, while many others thought of them as dehumanizing threats to a traditionally humanistic arena of study and wanted nothing to do with them.

Increasing numbers of rhetoric and composition faculty and public school teachers, however, chose to—or were ordered to—integrate computer technology into their classes, even though these instructors lacked the education and/or training to best do so. They often had little understanding of the software and hardware available, had minimal grounding in terms of how fast the tools were changing, and were frequently possessed of very few realistic strategies for funding computer-supported writing curricula or for designing and organizing computer labs in which students and faculty could teach and learn. Because there were only limited numbers of articles and books published about computer use in writing classes (*Computers and Composition* was nascent and *College Composition and Communication* published only a limited number of articles on the topic), these teachers needed informed professional development, support from colleagues, ideas from early adopters, and strategies for locating resources. Most of all, teachers needed time to think about how sound composition pedagogy could help them deploy computers—and, later, computer networks—in innovative ways that benefited both teaching and learning.

In this context, a summer institute focused on integrating computers into writing classrooms in meaningful ways—informed by composition and rhetorical theory, educational theory, and technological understandings—seemed a good idea. Thus, CIWIC was born.

The institute attracted teachers immediately. Increasing numbers of local, national, and international participants signed up each summer, even as the faculty leadership at Michigan Tech changed. Billie Wahlstrom, for instance, an early CIWIC pioneer, left for a continuing career in technology and higher-education leadership. Anne Frances Wysocki came aboard and contributed her own insight and new-media perspective. Gail Hawisher and Richard (Dickie) Selfe were frequent speakers. Visiting scholars like Cheryl Glenn, Adam Banks, Donna Riess, and Art Young added their own incisive thinking to the institute's curriculum. Publishers Bedford/St. Martins and, later, Macmillan, provided scholarship money so that individuals who could not otherwise attend the institute could make the journey. The stars of the institute, however, continued to be the massively talented and insightful undergraduate and graduate students who so generously helped participants experiment with the digital technologies that offered such creative and pedagogical promise: Johndan Johnson Eilola, Kelly Johnson Eilola, Kate Laterell, Stuart Selber, Bill Williamson, Karla Kitalong, Tracy Bridgeford, Dànielle DeVoss, Cheryl Ball, Kristin Arola, Erik Hayenga, Alex Ilyasova, and many, many others at Michigan Tech.

Thirty years later, the rich mix of CIWIC, now called DMAC, still works at Ohio State University and retains as its goal the work of supporting insightful teachers who want to integrate technologies into their writing classrooms in meaningful ways. Supporting the effort are, as usual, participants who continue to shape the field of composition studies: talented graduate students (Patrick Berry, Jason Palmeri, Genevieve Critel, Michael Harker, Katie DeLuca, Trey Conatser, Jennifer Michaels, Julia Voss, Will Kurlinkus, Krista Bryson, Katie Comer, Deborah Kuzawa, Elizabeth Brewer, Lauren Obermark, Sara Franssen, Sean Kamperman, Ryan Trauman, Harley Ferris, among many, many others); a new faculty director, Scott DeWitt, who has brought to the institute a scholarly understanding of composition studies and learning theory, as well as a broad and deep knowledge of digital media technologies; and a long list of visiting scholars, speakers, and workshop leaders, many of them interviewed by colleague Ben McCorkle for the institute's YouTube series: Jonathan Alexander, Hugh Burns, Christine Tulley, Kristine Blair, Cheryl Ball, Richard Miller, Christine Denecker, Joe Harris, Debra Journet, Anthony O'Keeffe, Gary Bays, Michael Moore, Mary Sheridan-Rabideau, Marilyn Cooper, Kara Poe Alexander, Jim Fredal, Valerie Kinloch, Carolyn Rude, Elaine Richardson, Kay Halasek, Claire Lauer, Melanie Yergeau, Beverly Moss, Eddie Singleton, Louie Ulman, Shyam Sharma, Susan Delagrange, Brenda Brueggemann, and Jonathan Buehl, just to name a few.