

Editor's Note

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If your 2022 has been anything like mine, it has been full and challenging, with (I hope) some significant bright spots.

Since last December, I have had a passage rattling around in my head from Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone's magnificent novel, *This is How You Lose the Time War* (2020). The novel is compelling and creative on its own. You should go read it! However, the part that has stuck with me is from the co-authors' acknowledgements where El-Mohtar writes:

Finally, dear reader, we dedicated this one to you, and we mean it. Books are letters in bottles, cast into the waves of time, from one person trying to save the world to another.

Keep reading. Keep writing. Keep fighting. We're all still here. (p. 201)

So much of academic work is an exercise in writing and casting letters in bottles in articles and books to uncertain and unknown audiences. Significantly, this whole enterprise rests on too often invisible labor: the work of graduate assistants, non-tenure track instructors, and the tenure-track faculty service, not to mention all the additional housework, childcare, elder care, and community service that has to be done to make society continue from day to day. Much of this work, as we know, is done by women and by people of color, whose labor historically has been at the core of what makes society work while simultaneously marginalized and minimized by those in power.

Journals depend almost entirely on that invisible, often uncompensated labor. This can be shocking for people outside academia to learn given how central publishing research is to the work of scholars and "The Academy." Authors are writing and submitting their work to get published. Reviewers are evaluating whether that work should be part of the published scholarly "conversation." Technical editors and editorial teams are managing the process to produce final versions of issues.

And everyone does this as only *part* of their job—or simply for the love of the work.

It might seem like this work should be the first to be abandoned in a crisis, for example, during perhaps a pandemic, or the repercussions of a pandemic, or

world historical social and political upheaval, or just when things get busy. It can seem that reading and writing as a kind of “fighting” is too melodramatic or lofty a conception of what we do as teachers, scholars, and administrators of scholarly journals.

However, in reading the work of this issue’s authors, in laboring with them, their reviewers, our managing editorial team and our technical editing team to get this issue out, I am once again convinced that it is worth the effort. Whatever our “fight” is as scholars, it is to create knowledge and to revise it in dialogue with thoughtful, compassionate, but critical readers and reviewers. And it remains worth it.

I am all the more committed to it here at *Xchanges* where our authors are all graduate and undergraduate students. We, along with other journals who publish student work, operate on the assumption that undergraduate and graduate students *are* groundbreaking scholars, contributing to the dialogical, knowledge-making enterprise of academia. They are doing the work. It is up to us to acknowledge that and provide them the means to present that work.

It is in this spirit that we are very excited to present *Xchanges* Volumes 17.1 and 17.2. Our double issue features two articles from graduate students (Angelyn Sommers and Jennifer Wilhite) and two from undergraduate students (Cassandra Cerasia and Kay Hernández). Their work connects thematically and serendipitously with one another in ways that, for my part, are all the more delightful for having been entirely unplanned.

Volume 17.1 begins with the graduate authors addressing how we might help developing writers at the college and university level improve. Both authors are thinking through how to more holistically support students as they struggle with the challenge of growing into identities as professional and scholarly writers by way of specific approaches to classroom pedagogy (Sommers) and peer coaching support (Wilhite).

Angelyn Sommers opens our double issue with her article “[Stories We Hear, Stories We Tell, and Stories We Live: Teaching Narrative in the Technical Communication Classroom](#).” Here Sommers articulates how narrative and stories might serve as a component of our instructional methods in technical and professional communication (TPC) classrooms. While narrative might seem strange to include when teaching technical and professional writing, Sommers argues that narrative and story have a substantive history of inclusion in TPC scholarship. Sommers illustrates how the field has only grown more attuned to the value of narrative and how it can be a path to greater inclusion, which only improves the quality of practitioners’ work in the field. Instructors can help students, Sommers argues, see narrative “as a dynamic tool that surrounds every aspect of the work they do” (Sommers, 2022, p. 4).

Sommers encourages readers to think about the application of narrative to TPC pedagogy in terms of three themes: Stories We Hear, Stories We Tell, and Stories We Live. The stories we *hear*, Sommers argues, are told in the assigned readings and class assignments. They must be inclusive and expansively representative so that a wider share of students can recognize themselves in those stories. Additionally, greater inclusion of the stories we hear helps students (and instructors) learn to listen, hear, and engage a wider, more expansive set of stories in their work. The stories we *tell*, according to Sommers, are those we teach students to tell themselves when developing narratives for grant proposals, in recommendation reports, even in infographics and visual TPC, for example (Sommers, 2022, p. 7).

Finally, Sommers notes the stories we *live* bring together the first two points and connect the stories we hear and tell to the everyday lives we all must live. Sommers poignantly asks readers to consider the way narrative requires writers in TPC to acknowledge their positionality—indeed a story is always told by someone, from somewhere. All of this, Sommers believes, supports the use of narrative as a “tool to drive social change.” Students and scholars interested in bringing narrative into the classroom and using narrative as a tool to affect change in their TPC writing should certainly engage with Sommers’s work here.

Next, Jennifer Wilhite also takes up issues of writing instruction support in her article “[Examining the Effectiveness of a Peer Writing Coaching Model](#).” Here Wilhite engages with the question of how writing at the graduate level might function as a barrier to students—specifically women who may be returning to school after pursuing a career or personal path. Wilhite focuses on the specifics of “graduate-level writing support” for this particular group of students. More pointedly, however, Wilhite asks what kind of support do these *students* “find most helpful/least helpful, and why?” The goal of this inquiry is, of course, to determine “what steps can universities take to design writing initiatives that target the specific needs of women entering graduate programs after time pursuing industry and life goals” (Wilhite, 2022, p. 5)?

The product of a 3-year study, Wilhite not only interviewed participants and studied their responses relative to the literature and history of writing support in higher education, but she also worked with students as a peer coach. Students with whom she worked and ultimately interviewed for her study came from a variety of disciplines, providing insight from within very different fields, some of which are not considered “writing intensive” in stereotypical ways (e.g., certain STEM disciplines).

Wilhite used Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) to identify themes and map her participants’ experiences as writers. As Wilhite notes, this process of mapping drew her attention to the fact that

those who sought help tended to be women returning to school after time away from the academy and that their support needs and wants were different from those students who had continued from their undergrad into their graduate studies without interruption. (Wilhite, 2022, p. 8)

Wilhite argues that these frameworks and the process of working with this student population reinforced the argument that peer-coaching can be a meaningful mode of writing support for graduate writers, particularly women who are returning to school after an extended hiatus. Readers interested in graduate writing support, the experiences of women returning to higher ed for graduate studies, as well as the use of CHAT and FST as methods should certainly engage with Wilhite's work here.

Volume 17.2 presents the work of two undergraduate students whose articles are also in potentially implicit dialogue, again unplanned and unintended. Both authors, in different contexts and in different ways, think through how persuasion and language use work in and through the rhetorical context of "science writing."

Cassandra Cerasia opens the second half of this double issue with her article, "[Analysis of Communication of Animal Welfare and Animal Rights in Aquariums.](#)" Here Cerasia conducts an analysis of the rhetoric and communication practices of two different groups as discourse communities: activist and scientific discourse communities. Specifically, Cerasia compares the way language around "animal welfare" is represented in films like 2013's *Blackfish* about the events and causes of the injuries and death of orca trainers at SeaWorld to contrary perspectives in science discourse communities. Cerasia also discusses the publication of an article sharing the results of a study about the use of cyanide in illegal fishing practices. Cerasia engages with the controversy that ensued when studies were not able to replicate the findings.

Cerasia addresses the cultural commonplace that activist discourse communities—perhaps because we generally believe them as acting in fundamentally altruistic ways—are accurately representing the situation about which they are advocating, whether it is preventing harmful fishing practices to the welfare of a larger ecosystem or animals in captivity. In her analysis, Cerasia highlights counter arguments from within the scientific communities that may render activist claims less powerful, perhaps revealing them to be inaccurate. While the details of such research and activism can be difficult for non-specialists to follow, Cerasia's work reminds us that science communication has especially significant ramifications for the attitudes of the public and the policies the public may demand be implemented to reflect those changing attitudes.

Kay Hernández closes out volume 17.2 and our double issue with their article "[The Importance of Language Use in the Discussion of POC and Minority Groups in the Biological Sciences.](#)" Hernández focuses particularly on the language scientists and scholars have used historically when referring to people

of color (POC) and minority groups in the presentation of research in the biological sciences.

Attempting to identify the “presuppositions and assertions” embedded in scientists’ work as shown in their language use, Hernández examines 30 scientific research articles from over a 50 year period and identifies the ways authors describe POC and minority groups with special attention to how those terms change over time, from 1970 to 2021. Hernández points to critical examples of scientists’ use of terms that we now recognize as outdated, indeed outright offensive and abusive today, tracking both slight and substantial shifts in terminology.

By way of a content warning, readers should note that in tracing the language scientists used during this period, Hernández’s article contains words now understood to be inappropriate, at the very least, and others we understand to be violent erasure as they center the more socially and politically powerful outsiders’ names for Indigenous, Black, and Brown people, among others. Hernández’s work is important precisely because they contribute to the ongoing argument that the language of “science” is not transparently objective. It is not necessarily a “pure” process, one to which we can unproblematically retreat methodologically when talking about others. As editors, we are mindful that scholars must sometimes engage challenging, uncomfortable, and offensive topics in their studies. We recognize that they must work at a point of tension between naming the problems with prior scholarly work, as Hernández does, while also avoiding where possible the reinscription in the scholarly record, for example, the casual linguistic violence of colonial and oppressive regimes that shaped those regimes’ “objective” scientific output.

Hernández’s article is especially commendable as an example of undergraduate research as they recognize with particular clarity and forthrightness the limitations of their study while pointing to ways it might be extended and further developed. Regardless, Hernández argues, we must attend to the question of language use in the sciences, for it is more than just a fussy matter of tone policing or mannered politeness. Rather, language works within and through our “objective” scientific processes to position and represent the very things we purport to study. Hernández claims that if research is to be an inclusive enterprise—and, I would add, it must be if it is to be something like “usefully accurate”—we must attend carefully to our language use in scientific research as well.

Hernández’s thoughtful articulation of the limitations of their research is an especially valuable way to end this volume because it highlights something we might often forget or may not have fully internalized especially as scholars and writers early in our careers: research is an unfinished dialogue. Articles and journal issues are not closed, sacred texts that we must only consume and interpret but not add to or build upon. Indeed, each article here, and in any scholarly journal, is an invitation to further engagement.

I would encourage you, dear reader, if you are an undergraduate, graduate student, or their instructor interested in any or part of any of the topics discussed by the authors of *Xchanges* 17.1/17.2, that you consider using them as an opportunity to engage, to conduct your own research, and to join in dialogue with our authors here and in previous issues as part of work in your courses and seminars.

Might I also suggest you consider also [submitting that work to *Xchanges*](#) for review and possible publication?

We would love for the opportunity to consider your work for inclusion here. Contact us with any questions you might have. The editorial team and I will be happy to engage with you about your work's possible fit for *Xchanges* and how you might position it for possible success in publishing.

Once again, our thanks to the authors in this issue for their persistence and patience in this trying year. We are excited to present your work to the world in *Xchanges*!

Thank you also to those who have agreed to join our review board in 2022. A special thanks to those who stepped up to review for us this year for the current and forthcoming issues. I know many of you did so under a time crunch or when circumstances overwhelmed others on the team. We see you. We are very grateful.

To those authors who submitted work but did not have work published with us or elsewhere this year: Don't feel like you should give up! Writing is revising. Writing is persistence. Indeed, research and writing is often more failure than success, trying again, refining, responding to feedback and reviews, trying *again* before our work finds its home. A time may come for us to abandon this or that writing project or task, but much of the time, it just needs a bit more work.

So, I want to extend a special invitation to you to keep up your research writing through your undergraduate and graduate work in rhetoric, technical communication, and writing studies and submit again to *Xchanges*.

Finally, I would like to extend several special thanks on behalf of myself and the managing editorial team here at *Xchanges*:

- Courtney Cox has been with the editorial team for over two years, working with Alex Hanson and me to communicate with authors, process submissions, and communicate with reviewers. Her work has been invaluable; indeed, her positive impact was felt even in this most recent issue. Courtney became *Dr. Courtney Cox* last year, completing her PhD in English at Illinois State University. We extend a hearty congratulations to her for this accomplishment. Courtney has needed to step down from the managing editorial team as she pursues her new career. We are sad to see her go but are grateful for her hard work with the team. Thank you

Courtney for all you have done as part of the *Xchanges* managing editorial team! We wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

- We would also like to extend our special thanks to Alex Hanson who has done a great deal of the work for *Xchanges* this year, especially in the first half, all while juggling her many obligations. Alex has stepped back temporarily from the managing editorial team and we look forward to her eventual return. In the meantime, we are deeply grateful for the work she has done in the last two years to keep *Xchanges* moving forward. Thank you, Alex!

- We would also like to extend a special thanks to Jennifer Burke Reifman, currently a PhD candidate at UC Davis, who has stepped up to assist the managing editorial team in the months since Courtney's departure. It would be no exaggeration to say that this double issue would not have come together had Jennifer not agree to help. We are grateful for her work and look forward to working with her going forward as part of the managing editorial team! Thank you so much, Jennifer! Solidarity!

- I would like to extend a special thanks as well to *Xchanges* founder, Editor-in-Chief, as well as its heart and soul, Dr. Julianne Newmark, for her work this year keeping us moving forward with direction, enthusiasm, and personal care for each of us on the team. Thank you, Julie!

Finally, a special thanks to you, dear readers. We appreciate your support of *Xchanges* and its authors. Please enjoy engaging with the authors in this double issue. As you read it, consider how you might engage it. Perhaps this might mean you submit your own work in response or on another topic in technical communication, rhetoric, and writing studies. Regardless, we look forward to connecting with you in 2023!

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~ Beau Pihlaja

Co-Managing Editor

References

El-Mohtar, A., & Gladstone, M. (2020). *This is how you lose the time war*. Simon and Schuster.