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Introduction

MAPPING THE HISTORIES, DEFINITIONS, METHODS, AND CONVERSATIONS OF MULTIMODAL TRANSFER

Kara Poe Alexander, Matthew Davis,
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MAPPING THE CONVERSATION

Since the start of the twenty-first century, research on multimodality and writing transfer has transformed rhetoric and composition. Separately and simultaneously, these two strands of research have impacted theory, pedagogy, research methods, programmatic infrastructures, and teacher training. They have reshaped writing courses and curricula across the institutional locations of composing—including the first-year writing classroom, the vertical curriculum, writing centers, graduate programs, and writing curriculum development. From the pages of journals and position statements to assignment design and assessment practices, research on both multimodality and writing transfer expands the discipline's sense of what writing is, what it can be, what it can do, how it is learned and taught, and how it can be studied. There are many reasons for the disciplinary impact of scholarship on multimodality and transfer, among them: (1) an epistemological focus, (2) an orientation to improving teaching and learning, (3) a view of writing as a dynamic rhetorical activity, (4) an expansion of the context and methods of disciplinary study, and (5) a shared focus on the crucial role of language in teaching, learning, and researching writing.

Both multimodality and writing transfer focus on epistemology: that is, what we know about writing and how we know it. Multimodality provides scholars, teachers, and students with an expanded sense of writing—not bounded by the written word but not wholly separate from it either. It is also focused on a range of meaning-making modes, each with its own affordances and limitations, genres and materiality, composing practices,

and necessary technical and technological knowledge and resources. This expanded sense of writing is grounded in the theory that composing—in whatever modes—is an “epistemological commitment” to certain modes and media as the appropriate means of meaning making in a given situation (Kress 2010, 16). Transfer research is similarly grounded in an epistemological approach to studying writing, often focusing on the knowledge domains from which writers draw as they encounter new meaning-making tasks. These knowledge domains include content, genre, process, discourse community, and rhetorical knowledges composers bring to their attempts to write in new situations (see Beaufort 2007 for more on knowledge domains). Reflection also works as a sixth knowledge domain (Taczak and Robertson 2016). The study of writing transfer provides scholars, teachers, and students with a sense of writing and learning to write that is not necessarily bounded by the classroom where prior knowledge, context, agency, and reflective capacity come together in moments of composing. Research on writing transfer, then, studies the epistemological dispositions composers have, how they draw on prior knowledge, and how those dynamics change and develop across time and context (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015; Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey 2012; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak 2014).

Both multimodality and writing transfer emerge from scholarly contexts oriented to improved teaching and learning. Multimodality, with its roots in the New London Group’s (NLG) (1996) work on “social futures,” was a framework for reconceiving pedagogy to meet the needs and demands of a twenty-first-century communication landscape. Writing transfer, with its roots in psychology, education, and the study of workplace writing, has focused on how understanding writers’ struggles (McCarthy 1987) and successes (Beaufort 1999, 2007) in new composing situations can lead to transformed teaching and learning of writing. In this sense, multimodality and writing transfer clearly have (and have had) much to offer the teaching of writing.

In addition, both emerge from scholarly starting points that treat writing as a complex, socially embedded, purpose-driven activity and prompt scholars and teachers to attempt to push past moments in which writing is treated or studied as if it were singular, static, monomodal, or immutable. That is, both multimodality and writing transfer point to multiplicity: of texts and contexts, languages and materials, and processes and possibilities. This emphasis on multiplicity not only results in a much broader view of literacy and learning but also underscores the importance of teaching such literacies, knowledge, and skills in classrooms.

To understand multimodality and writing transfer, scholars have adjusted the context(s) of their studies, the kinds of texts they study, and the methods by which texts are studied in those contexts. The result—as is evident below and in the chapters that follow—is a deeper understanding of composing processes and practices, a clearer picture of how those look across a range of mutually informative contexts, and a more varied set of tools for how to study them. In other words, multimodality and writing transfer have both broadened the reach of writing research methods and inspired researchers to develop new methods altogether.

Finally, both multimodality and writing transfer focus on the role of language in teaching, learning, researching, and practicing a range of composing practices. Both are vocabulary-building and reshaping projects aimed at creating a more expansive set of terms for describing how we study, teach, learn, and practice communication. Such a focus underscores the value of exposing writers to a range of composing practices, processes, genres, and situations.

Even given these shared starting points, readers unfamiliar with research on multimodality, writing transfer, or both may sometimes find both areas of inquiry difficult to grasp, not only because of the multiple, sometimes confusing definitions offered in the literature but also because the massive increase in publications on both topics has made it daunting to keep pace with the shared terms (and abundant synonyms) both areas of study hope to engender. For this reason, we start with a partial review of the literature that includes definitions of both terms. We hope this brief overview will make the possible work at the intersection between multimodality and writing transfer more visible to the readers.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

In this section, we provide brief literature reviews of both multimodality and transfer as they have operated independently of each other; then we bring these topics together and situate the need for *Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer*. This brief literature review does not attempt to cover the history of either concept or its development over years; a full history of both is beyond the scope of this volume.¹ We encourage readers who are interested in learning more about the history of either term to refer to two comprehensive CompPile bibliographies on transfer (Snead 2011) and transfer and multimodality (Snead et al. 2022).

Multimodality

The term *multimodality* (in its modern meaning) is perhaps best known from its influential appearance in the NLG's (1996) "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures." In the context of the NLG's multiliteracies theory, multimodality signals a shift in defining literacy and conceptualizing writing and composing. The NLG scholars argue that "all meaning-making is multimodal" (81), theorizing that multimodality is a theory that "relates all the other modes in quite remarkably dynamic relationships" (82). Two of the NLG scholars, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (2000, 5), later elaborated: "Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal" or in ways where the linguistic, visual, aural, and spatial modes work together to communicate unique meanings. The call of this group to expand the conceptualization of literacy beyond alphabetic text to include the various modes of communication (e.g., images, sound, movement, and text) was welcomed by numerous writing studies scholars who embraced multiliteracies and multimodality theoretically, scholarly, and pedagogically.²

For instance, Cynthia L. Selfe (2004, 43) defined multimodality in the context of new-media texts, describing them as "texts created primarily in digital environments, composed in multiple media (e.g., film, video, audio, among others), and designed for presentation and exchange in digital venues." This definition suits the context of Selfe's research on designing and producing digital texts to be circulated in digital environments. In a later account, Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia L. Selfe (2007, 1) labeled texts as multimodal when they "exceed the alphabetic" by "includ[ing] still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound." This second definition emphasizes specific modes—the status of images and sound in multimodal composing—situating the visual and aural modes as equally essential to composition as the verbal mode.

Numerous scholars have related multimodality to the discipline of composition (e.g., Alexander 2013; Alexander and Rhodes 2014; Anderson 2008; Bowen and Whithaus 2013; Haas 1996; Palmeri 2012; Powell, Alexander, and Borton 2011; Selber 2004; Selfe 2007, 2009; Sheppard 2009; Shipka 2011; Snyder 1998; Yancey 2004). Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004) called on writing teachers to have students' needs at the center of our attention and to change our conceptualizations of literacy, composing, and pedagogy to respond to those changing needs. Her argument to meet students where they are and to cater to their needs challenges writing teachers and researchers to think not only of students' self-sponsored digital practices outside our classrooms but also of students' future multimodal composing contexts (see also Rosinski 2017).

Similarly, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes (2014, 5) warned that overlooking “the specific rhetorical and production capabilities of new and multimedia may hamper our ability to understand the challenges that multimedia bring to understanding ‘literacy’ and communicative possibilities in the twenty-first century.” In other words, ignoring multimodal composing and continuing to leave it at the doorstep of our writing classrooms means we may “fail to meet our students’ most pressing needs as communicators” who use those technologies every day (5).

To summarize, multimodal composition pedagogies enable writers to (1) develop digital, rhetorical, linguistic, technological, and composing skills; (2) merge their composing practices outside the classroom with those in the classroom; (3) help students become more critical readers and writers; and (4) encourage students to see the multimodality of all texts, including print-based reading and writing that traditionally has not been thought of as multimodal (Alexander 2013; Alexander, Powell, and Green 2012; Bernhardt 1986; Hill 2004; Jewitt 2005; Shepherd 2018; Takayoshi and Selfe 2007; Trimbur 2002; Wysocki 2004). Multimodal composition is also inherently multicultural, inclusive, and democratic because it bridges digital divides, draws on multiple learning styles and semiotic modes, and focuses attention away from grammar and error (Klages and Clark 2009; Smith 2008).

Beyond these outcomes, multimodal composition has helped scholars and students better understand and explore the concept of affordances. Affordances are the unique representational capacities of a mode, including both its possibilities and its limitations. According to Gunther Kress (2000, 157), “Semiotic modes have different potentials, so that they afford different kinds of possibilities of human expression and engagement with the world, and through this differential engagement with the world they facilitate differential possibilities of development.” For example, the affordances of school-based uses of alphabetic language as represented in print typically includes linear, sequential presentations of logic and evidence, an unfolding of time in sequence, and, therefore, a tendency to present an argument explicitly (i.e., through a thesis statement) (Ball 2004; Walsh 2006). Audio affordances include accent, tone of voice, mood, music, and an appeal to pathos, among others (Ball and Moeller 2008; Halbritter 2006). Still visual images represent space and simultaneity differently, which affords “showing” meaning to an audience rather than explicit argumentation (Kress 1998; Walsh 2006). Moving image—like video—incorporates the affordances of static visual images and includes others, such as movement,

process, and passage of time (Burn and Parker 2003). Because these modes are always combining to create meaning within the structure of one composition, multimodal texts are less linear and more flexible in their presentation. Meaning is thus made through all of the modes deployed and their interrelations, which has the effect of encouraging different ways of making meaning (Alexander 2013; Ball and Moeller 2008; Blair 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; Sorapure 2006). That said, each mode's affordances are a function of its material affordances, the technologies through and with which we deploy them, *and* the way those materials are deemed appropriate for use in certain composing situations (Kress 1998). So any list of modes or of modal affordances is shaped by what modes are capable of *and* what we are capable of imagining doing with them (for examples that blur the boundaries of modes, see Wysocki 2005).

The impact of multimodal composition has been felt at all levels of curriculum development in writing studies. Many universities now require a multimodal assignment in first-year writing courses (Anderson et al. 2006; Reid et al. 2016). Others have added digital or new-media writing courses in their undergraduate majors as ways for students to expand their thinking and practice composing multimodal texts (Alexander et al. 2019; Lee 2020). Many courses and programs also assign PowerPoint presentations, videos, posters, visual texts, and other multimodal forms of communication across the curriculum, and definitions of writing have expanded. Of course, technical communication was one of the first to adopt visual and multimodal theories into its courses, but it too has benefited from multimodal composition theories (e.g., Bourelle, Bourelle, and Jones 2015; Cook 2009; Walters 2010). In spite of such integration into the curriculum, students and faculty in writing studies and beyond have sometimes been slow to expand their understanding of writing to include multimodal and digital texts (Melzer 2014).

In addition to its incorporation into writing classes, multimodality has also made its way into writing center contexts, as writing centers have broadened their missions to include multimodal compositions. These writing centers—sometimes known as multiliteracy centers—have updated their tutor education structures, training, and physical spaces to accommodate a more extensive range of texts and genres (e.g., Carpenter and Apostel 2016; Carpenter and Lee 2016; Fishman 2010; Inman 2010; Lee and Carpenter 2017, 2019; McKinney 2009, 2010; Sheridan and Inman 2010). Unfortunately, like faculty, writers have also been slow to utilize writing centers as places that can help with

multimodal composing, even when writing centers are equipped with the hardware, software, marketing resources, and training required to accommodate such projects (Lee 2012; McKinney 2012). In addition, tutors themselves have struggled with anxieties related to giving feedback on multimodal composition (Sheridan 2012), especially when they are not regularly composing such texts themselves (Lee 2012). Faculty have also been slow to recognize writing centers as places that assist these kinds of texts, and they are often unaware themselves of how to assign and evaluate multimodal compositions (Balester 2012). Writing centers can play a unique role in the university context in teaching and supporting multimodal composition assignments—and in helping faculty better teach multimodal composition—but this shift requires time, money, and resources, to which many writing centers and writing center staff do not have access.

Building bridges between practices inside and outside the writing classroom is one foundation of integrating multimodal composing into courses and curricula; similarly, building bridges between writing knowledge and practices students learn in the writing classroom and those they learn in other writing contexts is the cornerstone of transfer in writing studies.

Transfer

Learning transfer has been classically defined as “the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts” (Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino 1999, 52). That traditional conceptualization of transfer has focused on moving and extending learning from one situation to another, a sense of transfer that risks seeing what one knows as a thing—or a container—that can be transported around. While this conception of transfer as reuse of prior knowledge is still common in some circles, it presents a disposition toward knowledge as static, which can stymie writing transfer (Driscoll and Jin 2018). Therefore, recent research on writing transfer draws attention to two significant aspects of transfer: (1) a more dynamic epistemological understanding of the nature of transfer and (2) attention to transfer as a pedagogical goal.

Several scholars have suggested that the nature of transfer is more complex than simply reusing prior knowledge, and they nuanced the term *transfer* and its definition in the process. Michael-John DePalma and Jeffrey Ringer (2011, 135), for instance, define writing transfer as “writers’ conscious or intuitive processes of applying or reshaping learned writing knowledge and practices in order to negotiate new and potentially unfamiliar writing situations.” This definition implies

applying, reshaping, adapting, resituating, recontextualizing, and remixing prior writing knowledge and practices to new writing settings (Elon Statement 2015; Nowacek 2011; Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey 2012). DePalma and Ringer (2011, 141) elaborate this new relationship between knowledge and transfer through six characteristics, seeing “adaptive transfer” as dynamic, idiosyncratic, cross-contextual, rhetorical, multilingual, and transformative.

In addition to DePalma and Ringer, Doug Brent (2011) described transfer as the transformation of prior knowledge that can be facilitated and made possible through pedagogy and instruction. Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs (2012) argued that to facilitate such dynamic transfer—or what they called “creative repurposing”—for student writers, scholars need to examine and understand the influence of the educational system on individual writers’ dispositions about learning. Similarly, in *Writing across Contexts*, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak (2014, 33) define writing transfer as “a dynamic rather than static process, a process of using, adapting, and repurposing the old for success in the new,” relating this definition to the emergence of a curriculum designed to facilitate transfer. The shift in defining and researching transfer has also acknowledged the active and agentive role of the writer—especially student writers—to “both draw from and reshape writing knowledge to suit and influence writing contexts” (DePalma 2015, 616).

Because transfer is a dynamic process that aims at enhancing future writing situations and contexts by repurposing the knowledge writers have, studying writing transfer involves acknowledging the dynamic and fluid writing contexts and situations in which writers compose. Writers move back and forth between modalities and languages or language varieties, and they cross the already blurring boundaries between modalities as they negotiate their communication, literacy, and work choices.

This awareness brings us to the second aspect of transfer research: the pedagogical *goal* of transfer. DePalma (2015, 616) argues that the goal of transfer is to “influence writing contexts,” while Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014, 33) emphasize “success in the new [context].” Similarly, DePalma and Ringer (2011) theorize that the goal of transfer is to provide students with the means by which they navigate new writing situations using their writing knowledge. As a pedagogical matter, then, the goal of transfer research is to provide students with the conceptual frameworks and compositional tools that enable them to understand and negotiate future writing situations and contexts through rhetorical repurposing of the knowledge learned.

In 2012, Jessie Moore mapped the terrain of writing transfer research, establishing a foundation for understanding the questions, methods, contexts of study, framing theories, and outcomes of the emerging area of interest. This terrain subsequently expanded through large, multi-institutional efforts (e.g., the Elon University Research Seminars in 2013 and 2019; the Teaching for Transfer multi-institutional research projects) and by numerous studies of specific, often individualized, contexts for writing. Several edited volumes explored transfer in and outside the classroom, considering the multiplicity of locations and prompts for writing transfer (Anson and Moore 2017; Moore and Bass 2017). Other research focused on the knowledge dynamics of writing transfer, finding that reflection (Taczak and Robertson 2016), metacognition (Gorzelsky et al. 2016), prior knowledge uptake (Walwema and Driscoll 2015), writerly agency (Nowacek 2011), and process knowledge (Cleary 2013) all play a role in how writers develop and repurpose what they know for new writing challenges.

As the topography of writing transfer research became clearer, scholars also began creating, implementing, and assessing transfer-oriented courses and curricula to facilitate writing transfer for students. Building on early work by Lucille Parkinson McCarthy (1987) and Anne Beaufort (2007), scholars engaged with the question of whether and how writing curricula might foster transfer. Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle's *Writing about Writing* approach proposed that composition courses should be an introduction to the disciplinary texts and approaches of rhetoric and composition; one operative assumption there is that building this knowledge would transfer into students' other classes and (like other disciplines) into their potential work in the major (Downs and Wardle 2007; Wardle and Downs 2022). The Teaching for Transfer (TFT) curriculum developed and tested a writing curriculum specifically oriented to fostering transfer, finding that key terms, reflection, and theorizing writing helped students develop and transform what they know about writing for success in different writing contexts (Yancey, Taczak, and Robertson 2014). Subsequently, research into TFT showed its success in fostering transfer across a range of contexts and composing situations: across assignment types, including portfolios (Yancey 2017); across institutional types, including community colleges (Andrus, Mitchler, and Tinberg 2019); and for concurrent writing contexts across disciplines and outside of school (Yancey et al. 2019). Key to this success was students' ability to develop a "transfer mind-set"—a framework for thinking about writing as a broad, capacious phenomenon that incorporated their experiences of writing both inside and outside school (Yancey et al. 2018).

Contemporaneous to these large curricular projects, a robust body of research emerged focusing on transfer through and across a multiplicity of interconnected sites of writing, both in and outside classrooms. In collegiate writing classrooms, writing researchers were exploring evidence-based pedagogy and curricular designs attentive to student agency at various sites of writing, including in writing in the disciplines (Hayes et al. 2018), in the vertical writing curriculum (Melzer 2014), in technical communication (Brent 2011; Ford 2004), in disciplinarity more generally (Bergmann and Zepernick 2007; Driscoll and Jin 2018), with respect to writerly dispositions in the humanities (Driscoll and Wells 2012), and in the natural sciences (Baird and Dilger 2018). Still other researchers mapped the connections between writing education and non-classroom or non-academic writing contexts, including writing centers (Alexander, DePalma, and Ringer 2016; Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg 2016; Devet and Driscoll 2020), student athletics (Rifenburg 2018), internships (Baird and Dilger 2017), and co-op learning contexts (Brent 2012).

As the map of writing transfer has become clearer, researchers and teachers have gained insight into what happens before, during, and after college writing courses. This, in turn, opens newer avenues for research, including attention to the longitudinal view of writing development beyond the first year of college (Fraizer 2010), focus on prior knowledge (Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey 2012), and consideration of writing across one's life span (e.g., Bazerman et al. 2018). The connection between transfer and disciplinarity also continues to interest researchers, specifically as it relates to the "threshold concepts" that students need to know and develop for entry into the discipline (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015).

TRANSFER ACROSS MODALITIES OF COMPOSING

As alluded to above, multimodality and learning transfer share a great deal in terms of epistemology and connection to writing pedagogy. In 1996, the NLG used the term *transfer* relative to the "transformed practice" component of a pedagogy of multiliteracies "in which students transfer and re-create Designs of meaning from one context to another" (New London Group 1996, 83). One goal of this kind of transfer was to help students "engage critically with the conditions of their working lives," and the NLG suggested that a teacher's role was to create an environment "in which the students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their

own goals and values” (67, 87). Since the conditions of meaning production constantly change through the ongoing emergence of text technologies, a major goal of transfer within a pedagogy of multiliteracies is to prepare students to adapt their learning for those fluid and changing conditions. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), this preparation starts in the writing classroom, where students learn to create meaning from the various modes of communication and to reflect on their learning so they can transfer these communicative practices and multimodal composing processes to their “social futures.” In addition, as students reflect on their own learning experiences with multimodal design and production and on ways that allow them to “carry out” that learning to “work in other contexts or cultural sites,” students become more aware of their writing and learning goals and values around multimodality, which is likely to foster and enhance their ability to transfer that learning to those new contexts (New London Group 1996, 87–88).

Although the NLG linked transfer and multimodal composition conceptually more than two decades ago, our field has only recently bridged transfer and multimodality in research. For example, in his study of remediation of alphabetic personal essays into digital stories, DePalma (2015) shifts research on transfer to multimodal composing and to students’ perceptions of the transfer of their writing practices across modalities of composing. DePalma concluded that there is a need to adjust pedagogical choices to suit students’ fluid, evolving, and multifaceted needs. Subsequently, Jonathan Alexander, Michael-John DePalma, and Jeffrey Ringer (2016, 34) developed their adaptive remediation theory and argued that when students are prompted to think about their rhetorical choices while composing, they are able to “reshape and remediate their composing knowledge from one medium into another” or from alphabetic to multimodal texts.

The importance of perceptions and reflection for facilitating multimodal transfer has been echoed by a growing number of researchers. Irene L. Clark (2014), Paula Rosinski (2017), Ryan P. Shepherd (2018), and others have found that students often need pedagogical intervention to connect writing in digital spaces to writing in academic ones. Connecting students’ current digital practices and future writing contexts is a form of transfer that writing teachers can scaffold and facilitate through multimodal pedagogies and encouraging reflection. If students feel that their self-sponsored digital media practices have no place in the writing classroom, teachers miss the opportunity to engage them in rhetorical and critical media practice and in meaningful metacognition that would facilitate transferring those practices to future writing.

In addition, researchers have begun to connect transfer and multimodality through new methods and methodologies, not only developing methods for capturing transfer of students' digital writing processes (Pigg 2020) and social media practices (Shepherd 2018) but using multimodal methods—like video—in the study of transfer across media (VanKooten 2020).

Drawing from work in multimodality and transfer, *Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer* employs these theoretical and pedagogical frameworks to further develop the concept of “multimodal transfer.” This concept builds off of the concept of writing transfer, or adapting writing knowledge learned in one writing context to develop and enhance writing in other writing contexts. Multimodal transfer involves adapting knowledge of communicative modes to understand, develop, and enhance communication across other modes and contexts. Because multimodal transfer is not limited to writing as it has been traditionally defined (that is, alphabetic writing in print), multimodal transfer may involve adaptation from one mode to another—such as using visual design principles to help organize an analytical essay—or adapting from one context to another, such as using rhetorical knowledge learned in first-year writing to help write effective comments in a computer coding class.

This sense of multimodal transfer continues efforts to expand the definitions of writing and composing that undergird and guide our teaching. When students draw on communicative practices beyond traditional, alphabetic writing to inform their composing and rhetorical practices, they learn to hone practices not historically valued in school contexts: writing for digital spaces, creating multimedia texts, visual and spatial learning, multimodal thinking, and other “home” literacies. As important, students learn about writing in ways that help them connect those literacies—and transfer knowledge and practice from those contexts—to situations often not thought of as “writing.” We believe multimodal transfer can extend writing theory, pedagogy, research, and application beyond what either multimodal composition or writing transfer could do alone. We hope that by bringing these conversations together, we extend them both.

SITUATING THE COLLECTION

Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer stands at the intersection of two important conversations happening in writing studies: multimodality and writing transfer. As noted above, both of these conversations have

been covered extensively and well by others in the field. We now have more than twenty years of research and scholarship on multimodal composition. Similarly, we now have more than twenty years of writing transfer research. In fact, there has even been a trend in recent years that looks at this overlap between the two conversations, including the work of the editors and authors of this collection (Alexander, DePalma, and Ringer 2016; DePalma and Alexander 2015; Mina 2017, 2021; Shepherd 2018; Yancey et al. 2019) as well as others contributing to it (DePalma 2015; Jiang 2020; Roozen 2012; VanKooten 2020; Yancey 2017). We hope to continue and expand that conversation in these pages.

Part of how *Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer* continues the conversation is through looking at multimodality, writing transfer, and specific topics—such as the role of language in multimodal composition, the different exigencies and contexts in which people compose multimodally, and the ways these composing practices inform and are informed by classroom writing practices. The editors and authors of this collection have put forth every effort to provide data-informed research. The volume includes chapters that use multiple methods of inquiry, such as case studies, interviews, surveys, classroom practice, and combinations of these and other methods. These chapters also draw on a variety of analytical lenses for making sense of their data. Some chapters even provide new methods for researching multimodal composition. We hope these methods, frames, and data help change the way the field sees multimodality and writing transfer.

This collection leaves many roads unexplored and many questions open. We hope that the chapters presented here will lead to other areas of inquiry, and we invite the scholars reading *Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer* to explore ways to address the questions that remain. These chapters represent what we saw when we stood at the intersection of multimodality and writing transfer research. We hope you might see different things at and beyond that same intersection. We hope to one day read about views we could not see from here, like work on multimodal transfer in different disciplines, in technical and professional writing contexts, and in additional transnational contexts.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Multimodal Composition and Writing Transfer begins with the foreword, “Dimensions of Transfer and the Role of Multimodality,” by Chris M. Anson. Anson explores the nature of writing transfer and its relationship to multimodal composing. He offers five “additions” to our

understanding of writing, transfer, and multimodality. This foreword complicates the notion of what transfer is and how we perceive it, but it also introduces why *multimodality* is important to the discussion of writing transfer.

From here, the collection proceeds in three sections: “Multimodality and Transfer in the First-Year Writing Curriculum,” “Multimodality and Transfer in the Vertical Curriculum,” and “Multimodality and Transfer across the Writerly Life.” The first section, “Multimodality and Transfer in the First-Year Writing Curriculum,” starts with first-year writing, the most studied area of writing transfer. However, these chapters shed new light on this familiar ground. Crystal VanKooten’s chapter, “Seeing It, Hearing It, Feeling It,” introduces a new method of data collection for writing transfer scholars. VanKooten uses analysis of student video compositions and videos of interviews with students about their compositions to look for evidence of writing transfer. She demonstrates the use of expanded research methods, such as her video approach, as scholars continue to explore multimodal transfer. In “Making Transfer Matter across Digital Media Platforms,” Jialei Jiang explores the affordances of three online composing tools for facilitating writing transfer. Drawing on mixed methods data from seventy-three students’ reflections on using these platforms, Jiang concludes that some platforms may facilitate learning transfer more easily and presents four pedagogical recommendations for how to maximize potential benefits and minimize potential drawbacks. Joseph Anthony Wilson and Josie Rose Portz offer an alternative view of exploring multimodal writing transfer in their chapter, “On the Labor of Writing Transfer.” Instead of looking primarily at digital texts, they explore the idea of “multimodality” as it occurs through the textual practices of translation and linguistic boundary crossing by following the case study of Zhannat as she composes in different semiotic modes and different languages. Together, these chapters offer new approaches to first-year writing, multimodality, and writing transfer not yet investigated in other research. VanKooten offers a method of video-based interviews that can be used beyond first-year writing to illuminate instances of writing transfer, Jiang explores specifically how the uses of different platforms may facilitate learning transfer, and Wilson and Portz offer a view of first-year writing approaches from outside the US and with a focus on non-native speakers of English.

In the second section, “Multimodality and Transfer in the Vertical Curriculum,” the focus of multimodal transfer shifts to the vertical writing curriculum. Building on and expanding out from first-year writing, these chapters show, collectively, how multimodal transfer looks in the

broader university context and why it is important in developing writers. In “Equipping Tutors to Transfer Multimodal Writing Knowledge to Writing Center Contexts,” Kara Poe Alexander, Becca Cassady, and Michael-John DePalma offer insights into how writing center consultants transfer prior multimodal composing knowledge to their consultations. Drawing on interviews with graduate and undergraduate consultants in two writing centers, they suggest that consultants may not always be able to adapt their prior knowledge, despite wide-ranging experience with multimodal composing, and they offer solutions to overcome this challenge. In the next chapter, “It’s Not Like I Can Put a Picture of a Paper on Instagram,” Anna V. Knutson illuminates the role of genre in writing transfer across modes by interviewing and collecting writing from eight undergraduate students taking part in feminist organizations on campus. She demonstrates that students can and do engage in multimodal transfer if they perceive the textual genres as related—a relationship often linked to the length of each genre—and she uses this knowledge to call for a greater emphasis on genre in composition classes. Ryan P. Shepherd’s chapter, “The Other Curriculum,” draws on a four-year longitudinal study in which he interviewed six university students about their social media usage over the course of their college careers. He uses these data to present “the other curriculum,” or writing knowledge that students learn tacitly outside of school settings. He finds that students value the relationship between their university and “other” curricula less and less as their education progresses. To promote multimodal transfer, Shepherd argues for a greater emphasis on connecting students’ composing experiences inside and outside of school. These chapters offer insights into how writing transfer continues for students beyond first-year writing contexts—as they work in the writing center, as they engage in student organizations, and as they write on social media. All three chapters present ways students’ writing lives expand beyond the writing they are doing in school classrooms alone.

The final section, “Transfer across the Writerly Life,” further branches out to connect multimodal transfer experiences across writers’ lives. These chapters offer bigger-picture explorations of subjects such as writing majors, curricular development, extracurricular literate activity, and instructor disposition. Kevin Roozen frames multimodal transfer as literate activity, tracing multiple semiotic experiences in which learners make meaning across various times and contexts in his chapter, “Drawing Worlds Together.” Roozen focuses on the case study of Laura and how her experiences with drawing informed her understanding of meaning making for medical illustration. In his chapter, “Rhetoric in Its

Fullness,” Logan Bearden analyzes the use of metalanguage in composition curricula documentation to explore how these texts help students develop a meta-awareness of semiotic potentials that foster multimodal transfer. Looking at the curricular documents of ten university writing programs that integrate multimodal composition, Bearden finds that a rhetorical approach to constructing such documents could itself influence multimodal transfer. Travis Maynard’s chapter, “A Curriculum Delivered, a Curriculum Remembered,” explores how alumni of writing and rhetoric majors succeed (or fail) at multimodal transfer in composing beyond their major. Maynard draws on both survey data for a “macro-level” portrait of the program and six interviews with individual alumni to understand students’ individual experiences. With special attention to extracurricular and career writing, Maynard offers three programmatic design strategies for writing majors seeking to promote multimodal transfer. The chapter by Jeff Naftzinger, “If You Build It, Will They Use It,” provides a look at multimodal composition infrastructure on university campuses and details roadblocks to instructor use of this infrastructure. He focuses on four graduate instructor case studies to demonstrate how disposition and communities of practice may interfere with integrating multimodal composition assignments into courses. The chapters in this section highlight the extracurricular, non-academic, and professional influences on students’ writing transfer and serve to broaden our understanding of how transfer may play out in non-writing contexts, in careers, and in learning to teach.

The collection ends with an afterword by Kathleen Blake Yancey, “Transfer Happens; Transfer Doesn’t Happen.” This chapter connects themes in the collection, offers a broad view of the state of writing transfer and multimodality, and provides paths forward for future research.

We hope this collection presents a broad view of writers’ multimodal composing lives and how these multimodal composing practices in various contexts connect to other forms of writing and making meaning. As you read, please consider the ways your own writing and your writing pedagogy may be informed by the various types of composing you do both in and outside of academia. We also hope you will consider ways you can further these conversations in your classes, your institutions, and your research.

NOTES

1. For a history of multimodality in writing studies, see Palmeri (2012). An overview of writing transfer history is included in Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014), but for a larger overview of the history of learning transfer more broadly, see Haskell (2001).

2. Notably, scholars in technical communication have been studying multimodality and visual rhetoric for years (e.g., Bernhardt 1986, 1993; Haas 1996; Handa 2004; Selber 1997), but they did not necessarily use the term. Moreover, the study of multimodality did not really cross over to rhetoric and composition at large until the New London Group's (1996) work, in spite of its emphasis in technical communication.

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